CLASSIC POP PRESENTS

DURAN DURAN

40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Wild Boys!

DECADE BY DECADE • THE CLASSIC ALBUMS • INTERVIEWS • TOP 40 TRACKS + MUCH MORE...

COLLECTOR'S COVER #1 OF 2

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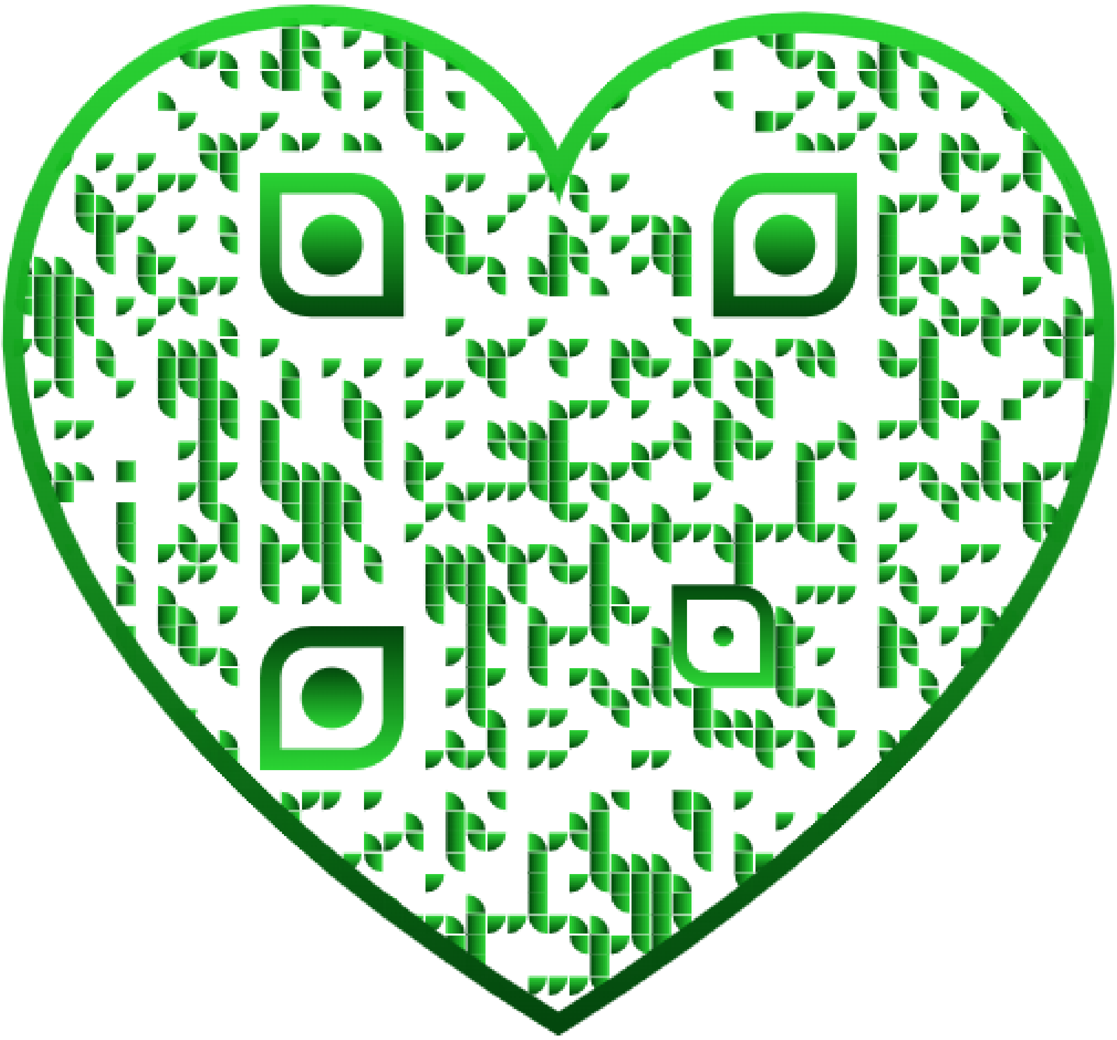

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GREATEST
UNDONE

DURAN DURAN WELCOME

I'M CONVINCED THERE'S A FASCINATING FEATURE THAT NEEDS TO BE WRITTEN ABOUT POP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH 'THE MUSE' – HOW, WHERE AND WHY IT STRIKES. MANY SONGWRITERS AND BANDS ARE ONLY FLEETINGLY CONNECTED TO THE ZEITGEIST AND IT'S USUALLY MOST KEENLY FELT WHEN THEY'RE BRISTLING WITH AMBITION AS THEY ELBOW THEIR WAY TO POP'S TOP TABLE OF PROMINENCE. BUT AFTER THOSE FIRST HITS COME TUMBLING OUT, HOW MANY CAN FOLLOW IT UP WITH SOME OF THEIR BEST WORK IN THE ENSUING DECADES?

11

Duran Duran can count themselves in that very select company of individuals who've continued to deliver astonishing work across the generations.

They're marked out by a peerless flair for melodic songwriting as well as a remarkable resilience, digging in and clinging to their dreams when the naysayers foolishly try to write them off.

Writing chart-friendly classics is only for the kids, right? Wrong. Read on and you'll find out more about the band's superb comeback in the 90s with 'The Wedding Album' and why their Mark Ronson-assisted 2015 LP *Paper Gods* is the equal of anything in their mighty back catalogue.

But what is it about Duran Duran that has meant they've pulled off pop's mission impossible again and again?

Perhaps the key to it all is two-fold. While they may have made writing hits in the early-80s look as easy as falling off a 72ft yacht in Antigua, the truth is that Duran Duran have become grafters. The lightning strike of inspiration is still there, but they're also more than willing to put in the hard yards to hone their songcraft like Swarovski diamonds.

Also, the Duran story is often one of triumph through adversity. Band members have come, gone and sometimes returned. Fortunes have fluctuated but a steely determination has always remained through it all – a desire to prove that these poster boys have substance after all.

Using David Bowie, punk and Chic as touchstones – and who could argue with those three as inspirations – the band have refined their brand to evolve it into the purring high-performance vehicle it is today.

The music, the style, the iconic videos, it's all here in this Special Edition. The best pop band since The Beatles? You'd be hard pushed to find a better candidate...

Enjoy the issue!

Steve Harnell, Editor

Steve

Follow me on Twitter: @AnthemEditor

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Mark Lindores grew up during the golden age of pop mags, devouring *Smash Hits* and *Number One*. Writing about the artists he used to read about for *Classic Pop*, *Total Film* and *Mixmag*, he is living the dream of his 15-year-old self.

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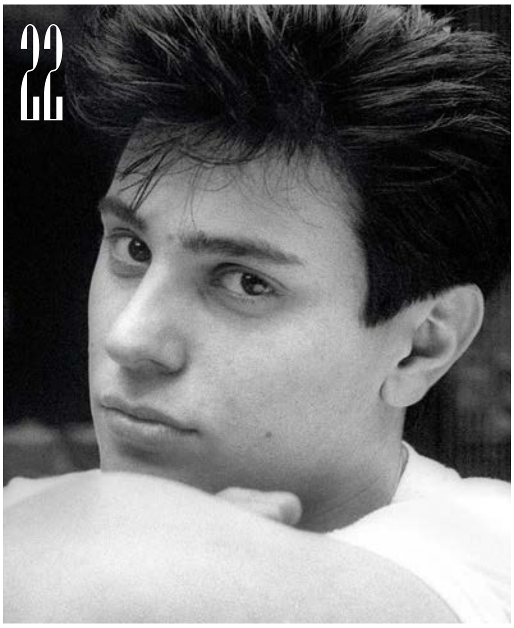

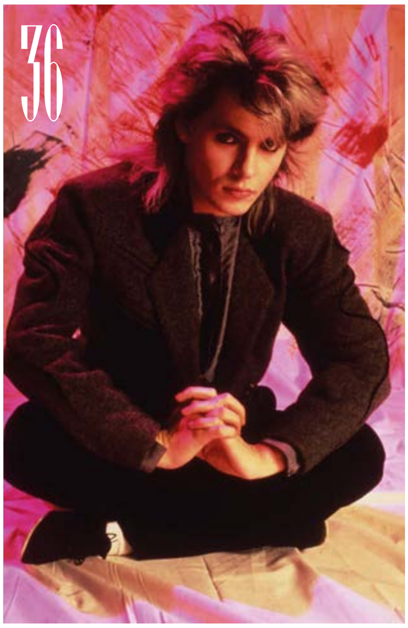

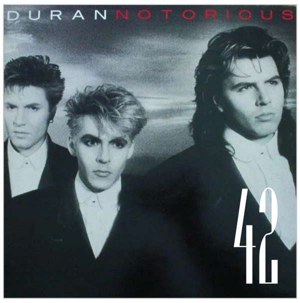

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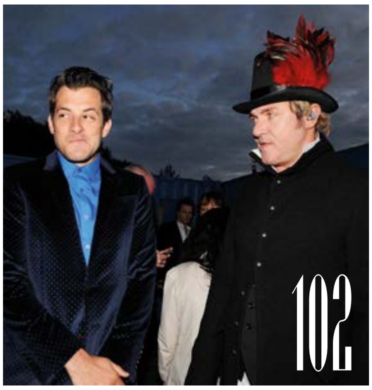

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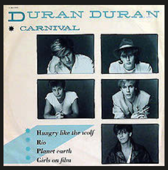
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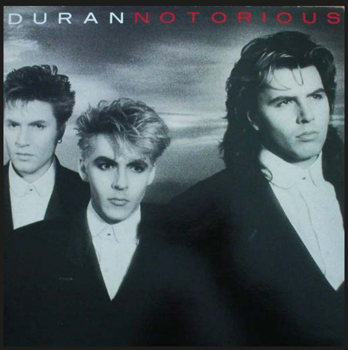
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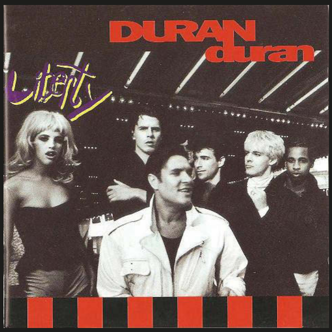
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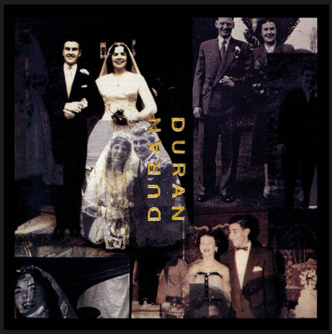


Over the last 40 years, Duran Duran have combined state-of-the-art pop music with cutting-edge graphic design. They've worked with an array of top designers and artists for their album and singles artwork including Malcolm Garrett, Patrick Nagel, Frank Olinsky and Andrew Day. The cover for their second album *Rio* remains a style classic that helped to define the aesthetic for sleeve art throughout the Eighties and beyond.

© David Tan/Shinko Music/Getty Images

1980s

CONQUERING PLANET EARTH

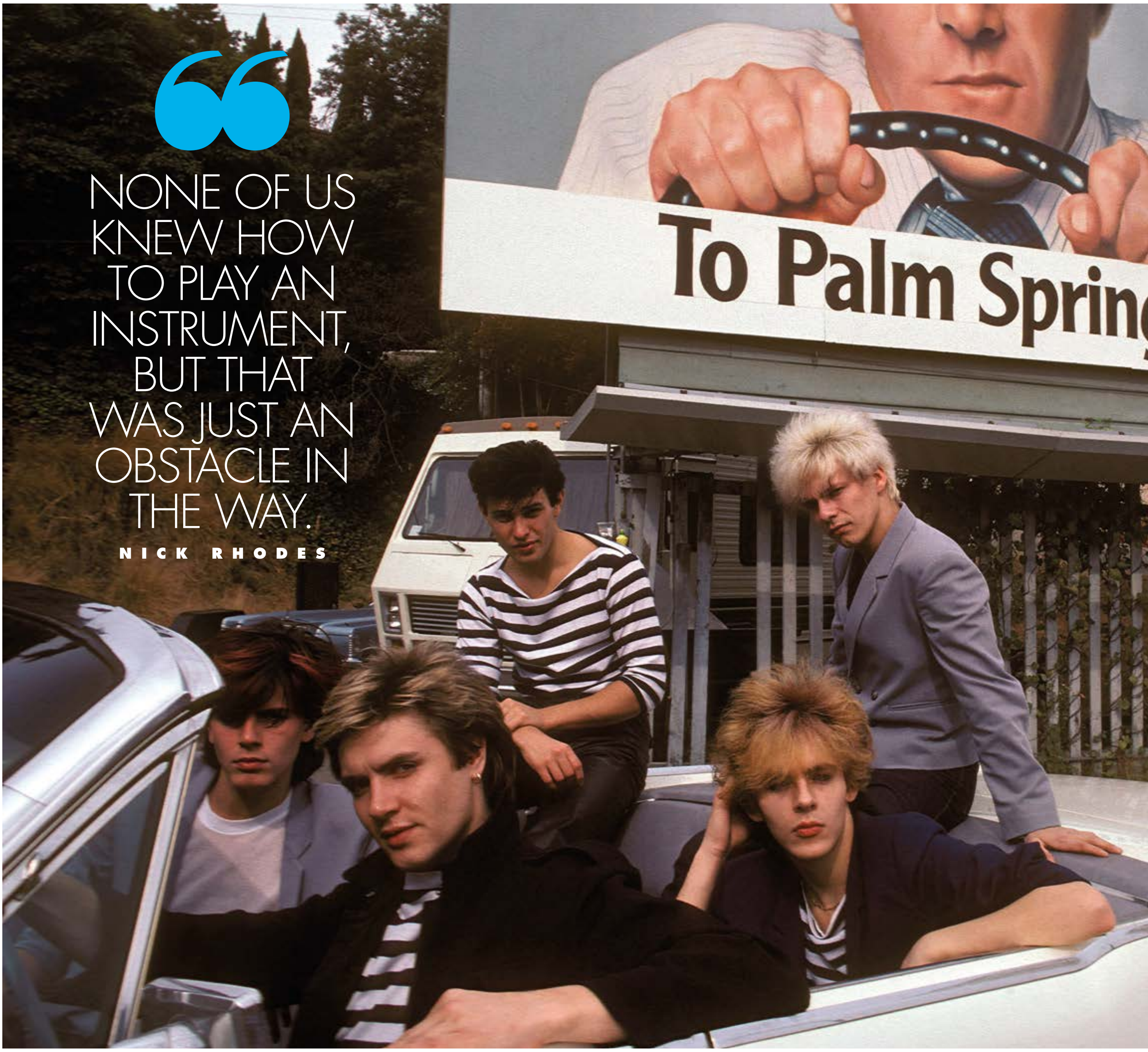
Duran Duran poised on the starting line for their first US tour in New York City, September 1981

FROM DINGY PUB BACK ROOMS TO TROPICAL CLIMES, THE GLAMOUR AND EXCESS OF THE DURAN DURAN SUCCESS STORY DEFINED THE EIGHTIES. HOWEVER, BECOMING THE BIGGEST BAND IN THE WORLD CAME WITH A HEFTY PRICE TAG…

MARK LINDORES

As the dying embers of punk gave birth to a new wave of flamboyantly-dressed club kids who pouted, preened and posed a trail across London's West End in the late Seventies, 100 miles away, a Birmingham five-piece with killer hooks to match their looks were honing a sound that would not only make them one of the defining acts of that stylish subculture but would also give the New Romantics their name.

The brainchild of Nick Rhodes, John Taylor and Stephen Duffy, three friends who shared an obsession with David Bowie, Roxy Music and the Sex Pistols, the group was born of a fervent desire to eschew the monotony of a life mapped out in the grey, grim setting of industry and manual labour, choosing instead to embark on the infinitely riskier yet glamorously glitter-strewn trail blazed by their musical heroes. Inspired by their idols' own escape from the mundane and the everyday by transforming themselves into otherworldly beings, the trio decided that forming a band would be their passport to superstardom.



> "NONE OF US KNEW HOW TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT, BUT THAT WAS JUST AN OBSTACLE IN THE WAY.
>
> NICK RHODES

POP_UP The ad that hooked Andy Taylor neatly name-checked Bowie's glam-era right-hand man Mick Ronson, Roxy Music's stylish Phil Manzanera and Pink Floyd's David Gilmour.

"None of us even knew how to play an instrument at that time," Nick Rhodes later recalled to the BBC. "But we knew that was just something we would have to learn, an obstacle that was getting in the way of what we really wanted to do – which was being in a band somehow."

Roles within the group would change sporadically as new members joined and quit, but the original line-up revolved around Stephen Duffy as singer and lyricist (plus occasional bass and drums), Simon Colley on bass, John Taylor on guitar (he moved on to bass after Colley left), and Nick Rhodes playing the synthesiser. In this format, the group began cultivating a unique sound which comprised elements of all the artists they loved. Realising their four-man line-up placed limitations on the kind of music they could make, they recruited drummer Roger Taylor (a previous acquaintance from the Birmingham music scene) and guitarist Andy Taylor via an advert in the *Melody Maker*. Now fully staffed, and having named themselves after a character in Jane Fonda's campy, sci-fi sex romp *Barbarella*, the newly-christened Duran Duran were intent on putting Birmingham on the musical map, bridging the gap between the scintillating synth-pop that was defining London's club scene and the punky new wave of Manchester.

DANCE TOGETHER ALL NIGHT

The key to the group transcending the back rooms of Birmingham pubs came with their installation as house band at the Rum Runner, the city's portal for emerging music trends. The venue was often described as the city's own version of London's Blitz club, although owners Paul and Michael Berrow had, in fact, taken their inspiration from the iconic nightspots of New York. They would frequently visit the Big Apple to check in on what the latest clubs were doing, returning with suitcases filled with the hottest Stateside records, often giving them the upper hand over Steve Strange's operation in the capital.

"It was much edgier in Birmingham," Nick insists. "When we came to London we finally went to the Blitz and we thought, 'Is this it?' because it was all so manicured and nice. Birmingham was more real and

Duran Duran in Los Angeles with Le Bon at the wheel, readying themselves for two nights at The Roxy

© Brad Elterman/FilmMagic

Roger, Simon, John, Andy and Nick strike a pose for noted rock snapper Michael Putland, Central Park, 1981

© Michael Putland/Getty Images

© Fin Costello/Redferns

John and Simon in 1981 in a photo by Fin Costello, who took the ***Duran Duran*** album cover shot

less cliquey – the crowd there was very colourful, fun and expressive. It was like fantasy world, really. If you made a Hollywood movie and they tried to cast it, however quirky they tried to make it, it would never touch what it really was. Paul and Michael Berrow had gone to New York to Studio 54 and Paradise Garage, and came back with a vision to bring that to Birmingham. And the look of the Rum Runner, with the mirror tiles and the neon, was a big part of that."

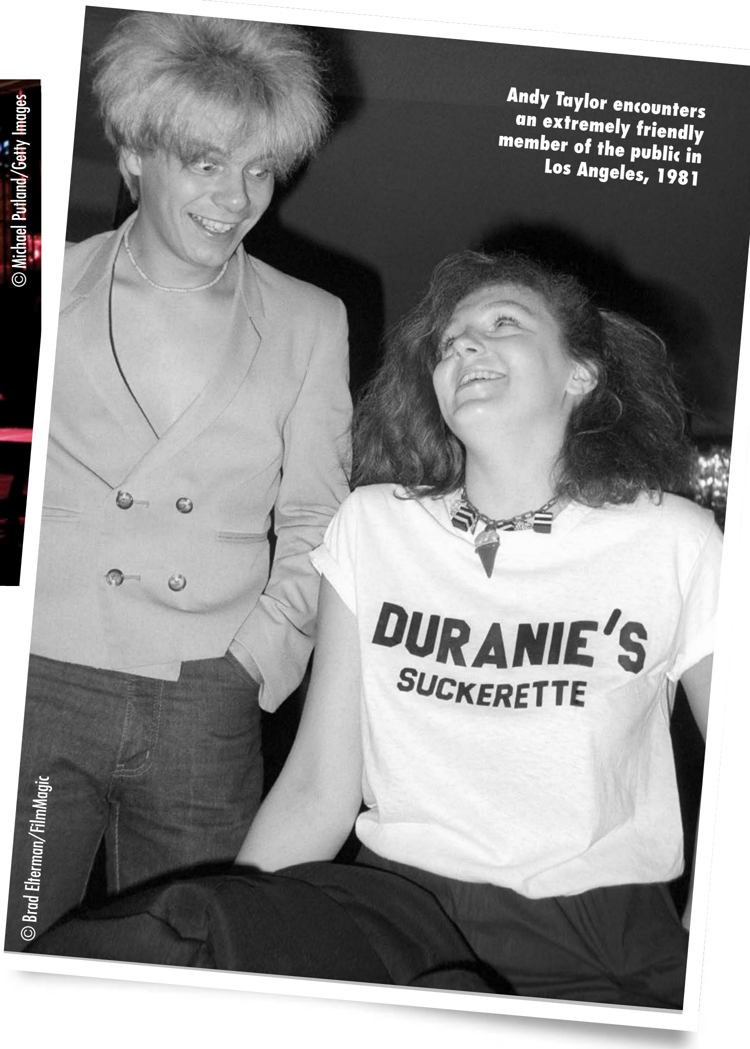
The Berrows had been impressed by the demo tape Duran Duran had given them to land a gig at the club and, spotting the new outfit's obvious potential, decided to take on a much more significant role, offering to manage the band on a full-time basis. As the brothers boasted a bulging contacts book and had a single-minded ambition that matched that of the band themselves, it made for a perfect union.

As well as managing the group, the Berrows allowed them to use the club as rehearsal rooms when it was closed (as they did with UB40 and Dexys Midnight Runners), gave them jobs as barmen, glass collectors, doormen and DJs, and bought them instruments and equipment. However, just as the group felt they were on the verge of a major breakthrough, they were dealt a severe blow when Stephen Duffy quit to form his own band, The Hawks, deciding he didn't want the fame and adulation the outfit was obviously headed for. The move threw Duran Duran into turmoil as they suddenly found themselves without a lead singer and lyricist.

In May 1980, after a succession of new vocalists including Andy Wickett had failed to work

© Michael Putland/Getty Images

Duran Duran's third appearance on *Top Of The Pops*, launching *Girls On Film* on 30 July 1981



Andy Taylor encounters an extremely friendly member of the public in Los Angeles, 1981

© Brad Elterman/FilmMagic

out ("We were known as the band that had a different singer at every gig" Nick says), Fiona Kemp, a barmaid at the Rum Runner, recommended they should meet her boyfriend, who had sung in various punk bands around town. With a background in musical theatre, Simon Le Bon had been a minor child star and was studying drama at Birmingham University when the opportunity to join the band came along. For his audition, he perhaps ill-advisedly went in character as a "rock star".

"I turned up in a pair of pink, skin-tight, washed-out, leopard-skin trousers," Simon recalls. "I just put on the best clothes I had that I thought would appeal to a band – especially as Duran Duran had previously, I'd heard, had a very stylish lead singer."

Sartorial misstep aside, Duran Duran and Le Bon were the perfect match, not only as band and frontman, but also from a songwriting perspective. The group had proved they knew how to create catchy, groove-based melodies, but were struggling in the lyrical department since the departure of Duffy. Le Bon arrived with a notebook crammed with poems and song lyrics he had written. "Not only were they lyrics, they were really great lyrics," Nick Rhodes said. "I remember looking through them and thinking 'Wow! These are songs in here. All we have to do is write music to these.'"

NOT WAITING ANYMORE

With their line-up complete, the band quickly threw themselves into writing and recording, supporting themselves with their jobs at the Rum Runner while playing regular gigs at the club. As the house band, they quickly established a loyal, sizeable following, with crowds flocking to see them. Ambitiously wanting to create a kind of multimedia event, Duran Duran took their cues from the art-rock of The Velvet Underground, incorporating film projection, theatrical costumes and references to the Warhol scene and the dark decadence of the Berlin cabaret circuit into their live shows.

As their appeal grew, the Berrows sensed that the band had reached its zenith within Birmingham and decided to boost their visibility by getting them booked onto Hazel O'Connor's Breaking Glass Tour of the UK as the support act. As the band attracted praise from critics up and down the country, a bidding war among record companies broke out, with representatives from all the major labels descending on the concluding show of the tour in London in December 1980. Phonogram and EMI emerged as frontrunners and the boys opted for the latter, citing "a certain patriotism" to The Beatles as their reason for doing so.

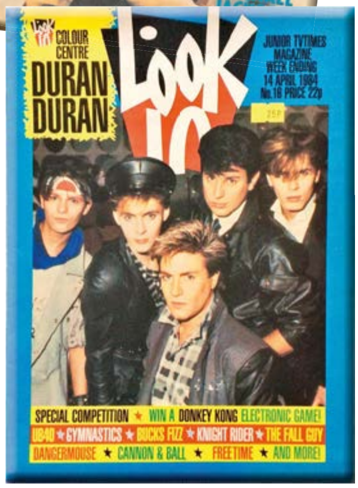
Having inked their first record deal, the band were keen to deliver on the first requirement of that contract and headed straight into the studio to begin work on their debut album. Thrilled to find themselves alongside Colin Thurston, who had worked on some of their favourite records, such as Bowie's *"Heroes"* and Iggy Pop's *Lust For Life*, Duran Duran's implicit trust in their producer ensured that the recording sessions ran smoothly and quickly, and they completed the whole record in a matter of weeks.

The debut single, *Planet Earth*, was released in February 1981. Fulfilling their manifesto of fusing disco, punk, new-wave and synth-pop, the track acted as an ideal four-minute teaser of the Duran sound. As well as landing them a coveted spot on *Top Of The Pops* and reaching No.12 in the singles chart, it crossed over to clubland, becoming a huge dance hit. Thanks to its "Like some New Romantic looking for the TV sound" line, the band was embraced by the subculture that was referenced in the lyrics.

However, after the follow-up single *Careless Memories* barely scraped into the Top 40, the Berrows decided to implement a strategy they had come up with during a trip to the US, where they had

POP_UP As a child and teenager, Simon Le Bon was a member of his local church choir and also trained as an actor. He attended Pinner County Grammar School, the same school that Elton John attended some years earlier.

© Fin Costello/Redferns



"There were all these colour magazines, and nobody was reading the weeklies anymore," John Taylor told the BBC in 2018. "It was perfect. We made ourselves very available for it!"

Simon and John larking around in front of a coffee advertisement on a bus shelter, 1982

witnessed the increasing importance of music videos. Played on giant screens in clubs such as New York's Danceteria and on video jukeboxes, visual promos were becoming such an integral aspect of the music business that a 24-hour music TV channel was due to be launched. Rightly sensing that the medium of video would be a highly effective marketing tool for a group of five attractive guys, the Berrows – and the band – embraced the concept enthusiastically.

After the basic 'studio performance' videos for the first two singles, the sexually-charged *Girls On Film* video, with its gratuitous shots of semi-naked models mud-wrestling, pillow-fighting and running ice cubes over each other's nipples was a masterstroke in the art of turning controversy into currency, hitting the headlines and earning the band priceless publicity. It was the most requested clip on video jukeboxes for three years running, and a censored version became one of MTV's most-played promos, while the single also benefited from the video's notoriety, becoming their first to reach the UK Top 10.

With two big hits under their belts and a burgeoning teenage following, Duran Duran's eponymous debut album was released in June 1981, reaching No.3 – the beginning of a run in the Top 100 that would last more than two years. With the album presiding in the upper reaches of the chart while the band toured in the summer of 1981, they were already keen to get to work on their next long-playing collection. They had the majority of the songs written (*Rio*, *Save A Prayer* and *The Chauffeur* were among the lyrics Simon Le Bon had brought to the band in his infamous notebook). This material promised a huge progression from the debut album, and all five members wanted to get them recorded as quickly as possible.

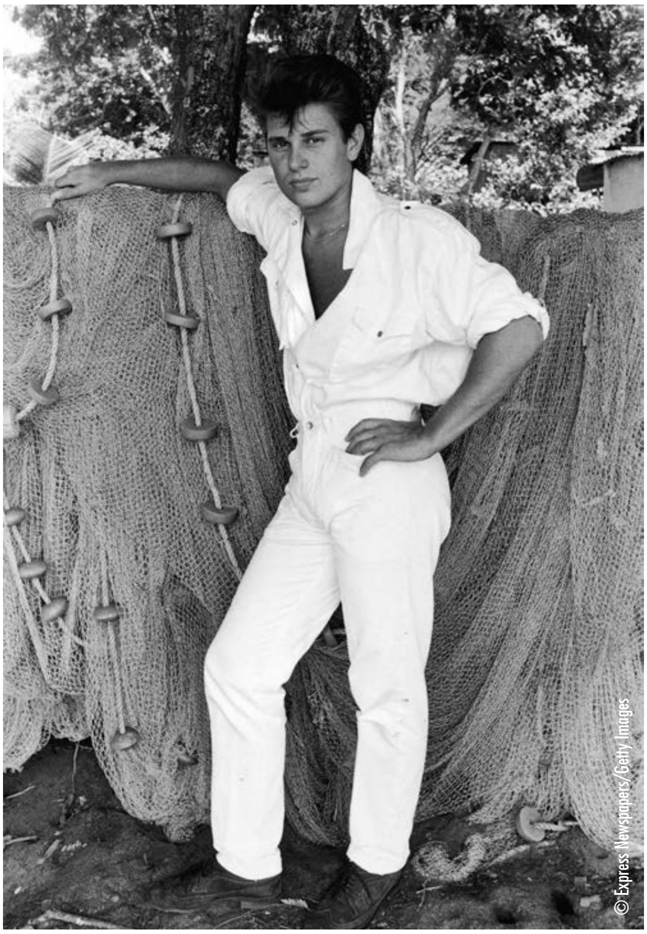
THE WORLD SPINS FAST

By 1982, the New Romantics were on their way to being regarded as old news. Aware that being considered part of a scene limited them, Duran were keen to distance themselves from it. If their debut had been the band getting its foot in the door of the pop world, *Rio* would see them kicking it off its hinges. A big, brash pop album, expansive in both scope and sound, it displayed a band that were ready to take on the world.

Although songcraft was fundamental to the album's success, a forward-thinking approach to its rollout was key. After realising the power of video with *Girls On Film*, the Berrows sent the boys to Sri Lanka and Antigua to film the videos for the album to enhance the jet-setting playboy image the band were cultivating. The simpatico relationship between their music and visuals became an integral part of the success of the group, with their cinematic clips becoming MTV mainstays.

As they lived it up on camera in exotic climes, the *Rio* videos also helped establish their fanbase. While *Girls On Film* had drawn criticism for its objectification of women, they redressed the balance by objectifying themselves in turn with countless scenes of the guys languishing shirtless on foreign beaches. These pop heart-throbs looked like perfect fodder for the likes of *Smash Hits*, *No.1* and *Look-In*.

While mainstream success had always been Duran Duran's ultimate goal, the rapidity at which that success turned to mania took everyone by surprise. As *Rio*'s delayed success in the US took hold in 1983, the band found itself the lynchpin of a



Roger Taylor adopts a classic all-white look in front of some fisherman's nets – Duran's band members could rarely resist nautical-related photo ops in the 80s

second 'British Invasion', leading the charge of acts such as Culture Club, Eurythmics, The Police and Bananarama. Dubbed "The Fab Five" in reference to the moniker given to John, Paul, George and Ringo two decades earlier, the hysteria that surrounded every concert, TV appearance or record shop signing (12,000 fans flocked to New York's Times Square to meet them in 1983) was unlike anything seen since Beatlemania.

As the adulation began to impact upon their private lives, they began to feel like prisoners of their success, unable to go out without being mobbed. As fans craved more and more contact with the band, nothing seemed off limits. In the age of social media, artists can post an Instagram story or tweet to appease the constant need for updates; in the Eighties, every weekly magazine feature and television interview was pounced upon and eagerly devoured, and soon fans began to follow the band everywhere and even hold vigils outside their homes.

CAUGHT IN A LANDSLIDE

The constant pressure and scrutiny soon took its toll on some members of the band, particularly Roger, Andy and John. As the biggest pin-up, John particularly struggled to cope, throwing himself into the debauched rock star lifestyle. "All I knew was that The Beatles did drugs, the Stones did drugs, The Clash did drugs… why would you not want to do them?" he later revealed to VH1. "If someone is really attractive and wants to have sex with you, then why not?"

The band had enjoyed such lucrative success in the *Rio* era that in early 1983 the decision was made that they should become tax exiles, living abroad for a year. This, it was thought, might also provide respite from the hysteria that surrounded them, as well

THE KEY RECORDINGS

ROCK, DANCE, GOTH, MOVIE THEMES. WAS THERE ANYTHING DURAN COULDN'T DO?

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

1982

Written in the space of a single afternoon at the EMI offices in London, *Hungry Like The Wolf* displayed a huge musical progression from the debut album, merging a powerful dance beat, a Marc Bolan-esque glam rock guitar line, Nick Rhodes' synths and a lyric which somehow managed to merge the innocence of the *Little Red Riding Hood* fairytale with the aggressive predatory sexuality of Blondie's *One Way Or Another*. Released as a single from the *Rio* album, it gave the band its second Top Five 7" in the UK and also became their breakthrough hit in the United States, thanks partly to the US's seduction by the band's *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*-meets-*Apocalypse Now* video treatment.

THE REFLEX

1984

Struggling to find a third single from *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, Duran Duran sensed *The Reflex* was a hit – but just not in its original form. Nile Rodgers' startling remix delivered a futuristic, expansive monster of a track that sliced and sampled the vocals to create an exciting new effect, all multi-layered over sequenced beats and with a production bristling with the Chic mainman's trademark pop sheen. EMI feared it would alienate the fans, so the band and Rodgers had to fight to get this brave new version released as the official single. It duly became the band's second UK No.1 hit, and Duran's alliance with Nile Rodgers would endure throughout their career.

THE WILD BOYS

1984

The band decided to take another sonic adventure with Nile Rodgers for the next single, *The Wild Boys*. Though video director Russell Mulcahy's plans to use it on a forthcoming film adaptation came to nothing, he fed his ideas into the accompanying – and ground-breaking – pop promo. With its aggressive production, chant-like chorus and fusion of rock guitars and electronic drums, *The Wild Boys*' futuristic sound was an exciting indication of the direction the band were planning had touring commitments and exhaustion not put paid to a new studio album in 1984. All Music Guide praises its "sense of steely grandeur" and adds "it sounds more like The Sisters Of Mercy".

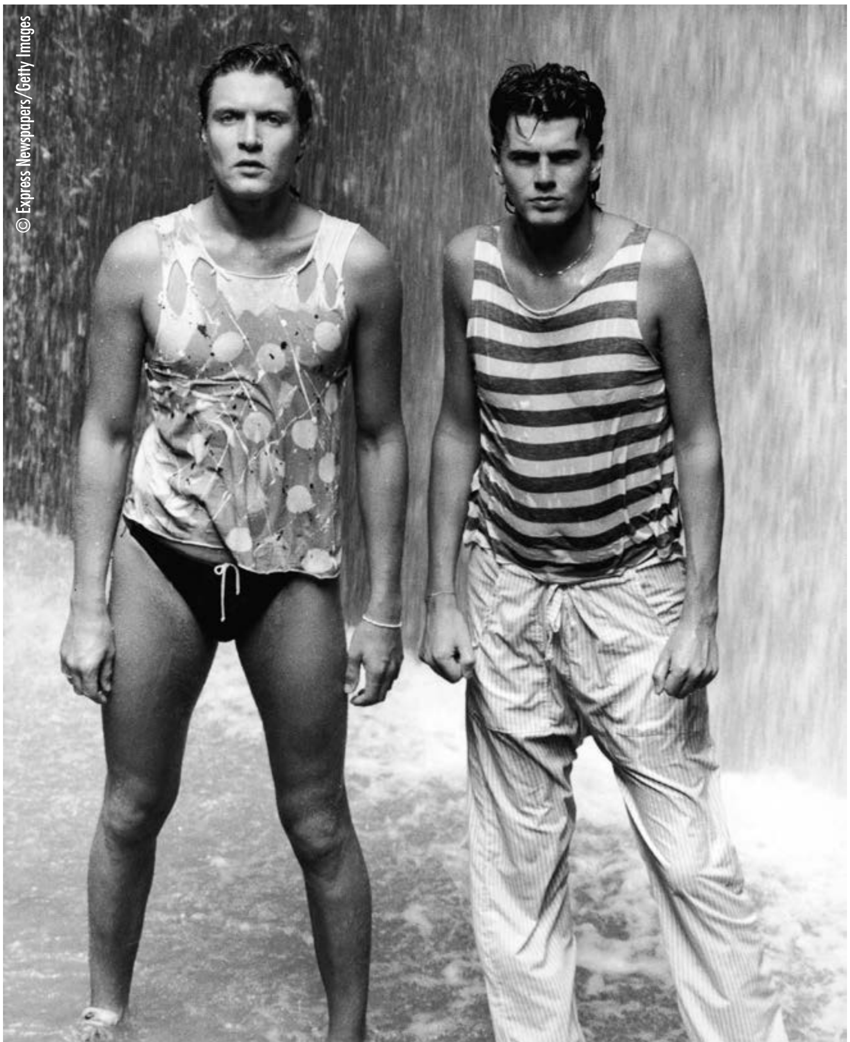
A VIEW TO A KILL

1985

As one of the biggest bands in the world with a reputation for jetting off to exotic locations and being constantly surrounded by glamorous women, it was a no-brainer that Duran Duran would be a perfect match for the louche yet lethal James Bond. "It was a big deal, and it was a big song and we were just so lucky to work with John Barry," John Taylor said. "Bond songs have to be big songs, don't they? They have to have the grandiosity. It's like designing a Rolls-Royce. You want it to be completely state of the art, but it's always going to have the honking great radiator grille on the front. There's certain criteria that have to be fulfilled. But I think we nailed it with that song."

© Dave Hogan/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Pandemonium reaches danger level at a Duran Duran concert, 1983



© Express Newspapers/Getty Images

Left: Simon and John cool off under a waterfall. The far-flung locations were actually relatively cheap, but the photo opportunities alone were worth their weight in gold

as minimising the risk of becoming overexposed – something which was a serious possibility at the time, with negative or disparaging articles about the band appearing more frequently in the press.

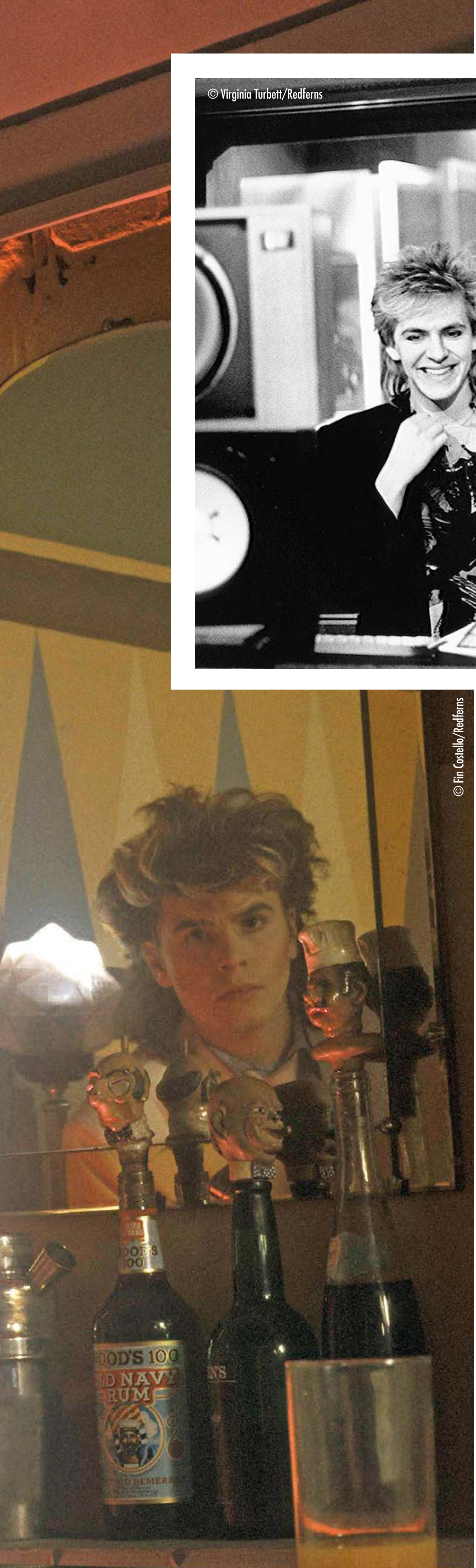
A standalone single, *Is There Something I Should Know?* was released in March to satiate fans' appetites for fresh Duran until the next album could be made. It gave the band their first UK No.1 single (it was, in a way, Nick Rhodes' second, as he had co-produced *Too Shy* for Kajagoogoo, which hit the top spot in January). Then, in May, Duran departed for Cannes to begin working on their third record.

Released in November 1983, *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* was the result of eight months in France, Montserrat and Australia and cost a reported half a million pounds. As well as revealing a more dance-oriented sound, the group was keen to downplay their image as globe-trotting playboys, fearing it was fuelling resentment towards them.

"A lot of what was said or written about us at that time was a very big misconception," Nick later clarified. "It is fair to say that we did play up to the playboy image at the beginning but when people saw us flying all round the world, the truth was we were slaving away in recording studios, playing gigs or shooting videos… we just chose nicer places than other people to do those things in. A lot of the time, we only saw the inside of our hotel rooms."

Simon conjures up the spirit of Bryan Ferry while John is reflected in the mirror

© Virginia Turbett/Redferns



© Fin Costello/Redferns

Nick and Nile Rodgers in Maison Rouge Studios, London, recording *The Wild Boys* in July 1984

Although the first two singles had been hits, they had failed to live up to Duran Duran's impossibly high expectations. It was a radically remixed version of *The Reflex*, reworked by Nile Rodgers using the very latest studio trickery, that became the biggest hit of the album and also their career, topping the charts on both sides of the Atlantic. Though EMI had initially hated the remix, the band fought for it, feeling it was emblematic of the sound they wanted to pursue.

However, as the tour wrapped in April 1984, none of the band were keen on the concept of going straight back into the studio. After being away for a year, first recording the album then going out on tour, the idea of spending time at home with family and their partners was more appealing than a return to work, however lucrative. In place of a new album, Duran Duran launched a host of new products including a live video, a backstage documentary of their tour and a photo book capturing them both onstage and behind the scenes.

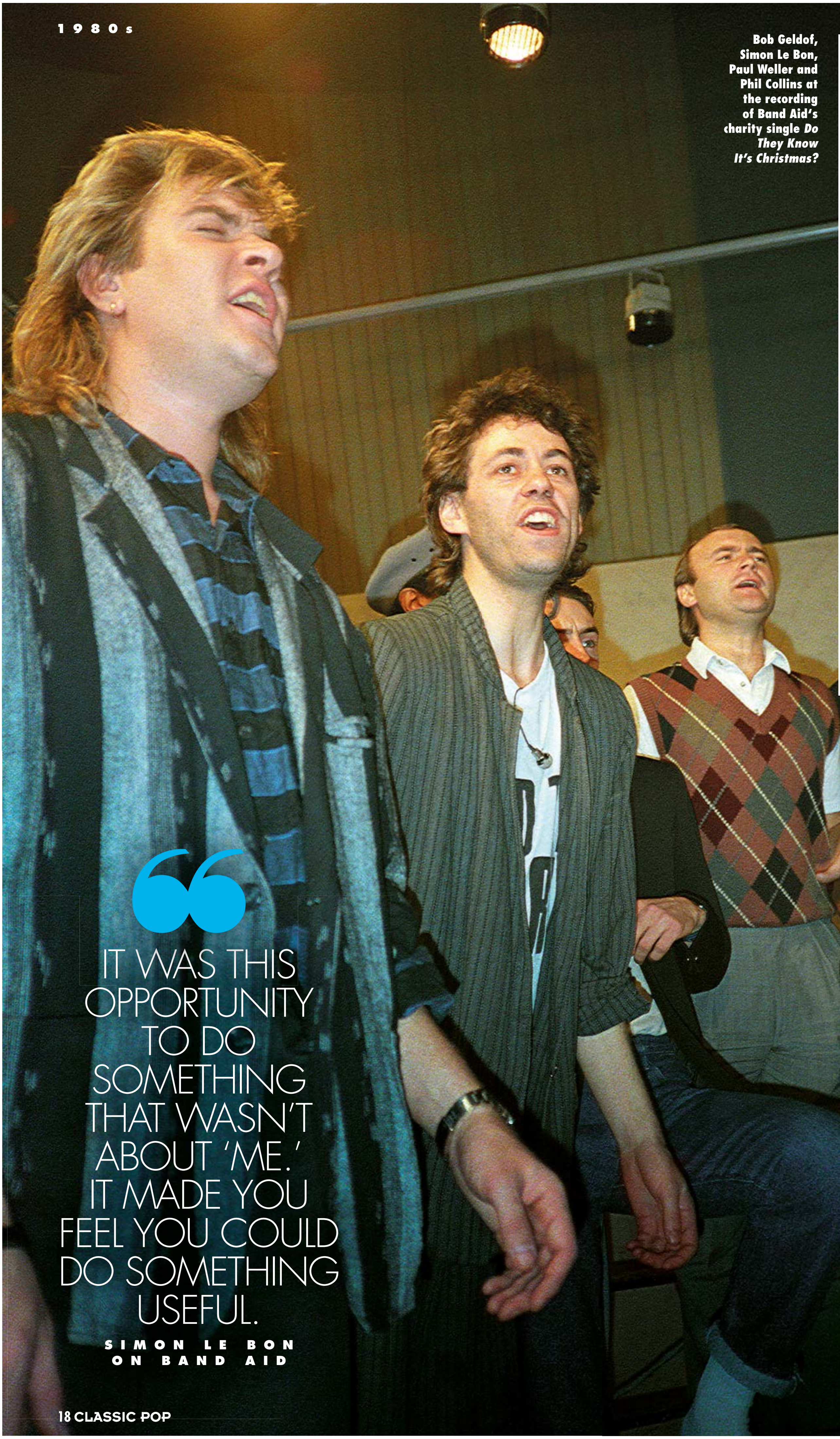
Released in time for Christmas 1984, *Arena* was a compilation of live performances from their Sing Blue Silver Tour. As well as live versions of some of their best-known tracks, it also featured a new offering, *The Wild Boys*. This was intended to be the theme to a proposed film adaptation of William Burroughs' novel of the same name

The festive season in 1984 also saw all five of Duran Duran featuring prominently on one of the most important singles of all time – Band Aid's *Do They Know It's Christmas?*

Simon was the fourth vocalist who appears on the song, sharing the microphone with Sting at one point while Roger, Nick, John and Andy contribute to the group vocal. The latter two members also featured as instrumentalists on the track.

Simon claims he was the first person approached by Bob Geldof to get onboard the project. The Duran star readily agreed: "It was this opportunity to

POP_UP Tech enthusiasts were delighted to see that Nick Rhodes operated a Fairlight CMI – the first digital sampling synthesiser – with a light pen in the video for *The Reflex* and the accompanying live tour.



Bob Geldof, Simon Le Bon, Paul Weller and Phil Collins at the recording of Band Aid's charity single *Do They Know It's Christmas?*

© Paul Natkin/WireImage

> IT WAS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOMETHING THAT WASN'T ABOUT 'ME.' IT MADE YOU FEEL YOU COULD DO SOMETHING USEFUL.
>
> **SIMON LE BON ON BAND AID**

© Steve Hurrell/Redferns

Duran Duran play at Live Aid on 13 July 1985 in Philadelphia

do something that wasn't about 'me.' It made you feel you could do something useful."

At first, Simon was under the impression that he would be singing the song as a duet with Sting. It was only when he arrived at Sarm Studios he realised he'd only be one part of a much bigger picture. He told *Rolling Stone* magazine: "I thought I was going to get half the song. I was a bit pissed off, because when I walked into [Sarm], they're already recording somebody else singing one of my lines! That took a while to sort of get my head around."

CHASING AFTER RAINBOWS

After spending five years inside the high pressure cooker of Duran Duran, the band decided to take a break to pursue other musical outlets. John and Andy formed The Power Station with singer Robert Palmer and Chic drummer Tony Thompson (Chic bassist Bernard Edwards also dropped in on production), while Nick, Roger and Simon formed Arcadia. On top of all this, John released a solo single from the *9½ Weeks* soundtrack, Simon cheated death during a sailing competition before marrying model Yasmin Parvaneh, and Andy began work on a solo record.

Following their close association with the Band Aid project, Duran Duran briefly reconvened to perform at Live Aid in Philadelphia on 13 July 1985 – the band were currently at No.1 in the US Billboard chart with their Bond theme *A View To A Kill*.

Although it was not intended to be a farewell performance, it eventually became the final time that the original fivepiece played live until July 2003.

The band performed a four-song set that comprised current single *A View To A Kill*, *Union Of The Snake*, *Save A Prayer* and *The Reflex*.

A LIFE IN PERIL

SIMON LE BON'S PASSION AND A CLOSE, CLOSE CALL…

Simon Le Bon's upturned yacht Drum being towed to safety after the near-disaster, 1985

© Alan Davidson / Silverhub/REX/Shutterstock

Although the sight of Simon and his bandmates draped in silk Antony Price suits onboard a yacht hurtling triumphantly across the water in the *Rio* video is one of the most indelible images of the Eighties, the flipside of that pop milestone saw him embroiled in a terrifying maritime accident that could not have been less glamorous.

While Duran Duran were on their hiatus in August 1985, Simon was participating in the Fastnet Race, from Cowes to Plymouth via Ireland, when disaster struck just off Falmouth in Cornwall in gale-force headwinds. Drum, the 78-foot yacht owned by Simon and the Berrow brothers, lost its massive 14-ton keel due to a design failure and capsized, trapping Le Bon and five other members of the 24-strong crew inside the hull for three-quarters of an hour. As the vessel flooded with water, they were also under threat of being poisoned by a mixture of battery acid and diesel fumes.

"It was the moment that I looked death in the eyes," Le Bon told the BBC. "All sorts of things were going through my mind… I thought about how I wouldn't ever see Yasmin again, I wouldn't see my brothers or my mum or dad again. Those thoughts were very clear in my mind. Then after about 45 minutes, we could hear a helicopter. After an hour, a diver pops his head up and I managed to swim out, surface and climb on top of the boat. Then I was winched off and taken back to land – it was very frightening. It initiated in me a real feeling of warmth and support for the air-sea rescue service. I feel I owe them so much."

Unperturbed by the ordeal, Le Bon and Drum would go on to participate in the 1985-1986 Whitbread Round The World Race, coming in third overall in elapsed time. After Simon and his partners eventually sold Drum, the events surrounding the yacht and the races were documented in a 1989 movie entitled *Drum – The Journey Of A Lifetime* and the book *One Watch At A Time* written by Drum's skipper, Skip Novak.

In 2005, Simon decided to return to the sport again and was part of Drum's crew in the Fastnet Race, borrowing the vessel from its new owner, the Scottish car dealership owner and billionaire Sir Arnold Clark.

Le Bon raised funds for the RNLI charity with his appearance in the event. Though this time Drum completed the race, light winds slowed her progress and Simon had to leave the race before it finished, as a late arrival in Plymouth would have caused him to miss Duran's touring commitments in Japan.

© Dave Hogan/Getty Images

Onwards to the future: Nick, Simon and John Taylor with the stripped-down but determined new Duran Duran

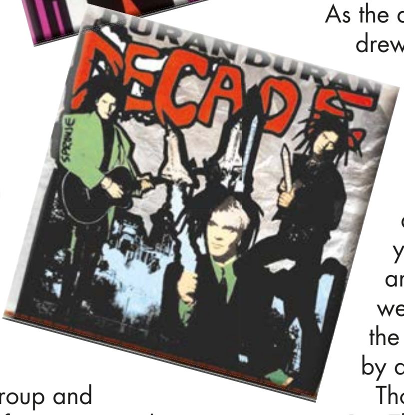
POP_UP Warren Cuccurullo contributed a great deal to Duran Duran, but the fit wasn't perfect. "It was when he started doing nude shoots that I realised he wasn't right for the band," Le Bon told *The Quietus*.

Unfortunately, their Live Aid set became infamous for Le Bon inadvertently hitting an off-key falsetto note in the chorus of *A View to a Kill*, an error that made headlines as 'The Bum Note Heard Round the World'. Le Bon later described the moment as the most embarrassing of his career.

Like the hastily-reconvened Led Zeppelin, the band were lambasted in the press with Le Bon being singled out for harsh criticism for that single vocal misstep.

Following Live Aid, band discussions about their next album revealed that not everyone wanted the same thing. Roger Taylor left the group and the music business, and, after weeks of noncommittal discussion, Andy Taylor vanished to pursue a solo career and the band split from Paul and Michael Berrow to manage themselves instead. With Nick, John and Simon pledging to carry on as a trio, the new Duran was to be an entirely different entity.

The sessions for the next album proved problematic. As well as being sidetracked by acrimony and legal disputes with Andy Taylor, the introduction of fresh musicians meant the group struggled to find a new sense of identity. Still, with new guitarist Warren Cuccurullo and producer Nile Rodgers acting as session musicians, *Notorious* was completed and released in November 1986. While the title track was a sizable hit, its follow-ups only made a minor impact and the album peaked at an unjust No.16 in the UK, indicating that the streamlined Duran Duran weren't packing as much punch as before.



As the decade that they had defined drew to a close and music shifted more towards dance culture, the unrest within the band was evident. "Being in Duran Duran in the late Eighties was awful," John later admitted. "The early days were great, but in the later years we were managing ourselves and people were suggesting that we were finished and should end the band. I was literally hanging on by a thread."

Though their next album, 1988's *Big Thing*, possessed an experimental edge and flirted briefly with the rising club scene, the juxtaposition of that influence with songs that harked back to their earlier work resulted in a rather disjointed collection.

A victim of a band who had seemingly lost their confidence within the evolving musical landscape, *Big Thing* was a moderate success but clearly indicated there was a need to regroup, establish a direction and redefine their identity as they moved into the Nineties.

Buying themselves time and marking the end of their first tenure with the appropriately-titled greatest hits album *Decade*, they closed an incredible first chapter of the Duran Duran story.

CLASSIC POP

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Nick Rhodes and Andy Taylor, pictured in April 1982, playing *Knees Up Mother Brown* during a break from recording the album *Rio* at AIR Studios in London

Roger Taylor looking cool during Duran Duran's first photo session for *Sounds* magazine in The Rum Runner club, Birmingham, on 18 May 1981

Duran Duran are mobbed by fans leaving Hammersmith Odeon after their triumphant sold-out Christmas show on 16 December 1981

CLASSIC POP CHECKS OUT KINGS OF THE DARK MOON, A CANDID PHOTO BOOK THAT CHARTS THE RISE OF DURAN DURAN FROM FRESH-FACED NEWCOMERS TO GLOBAL MEGASTARS…

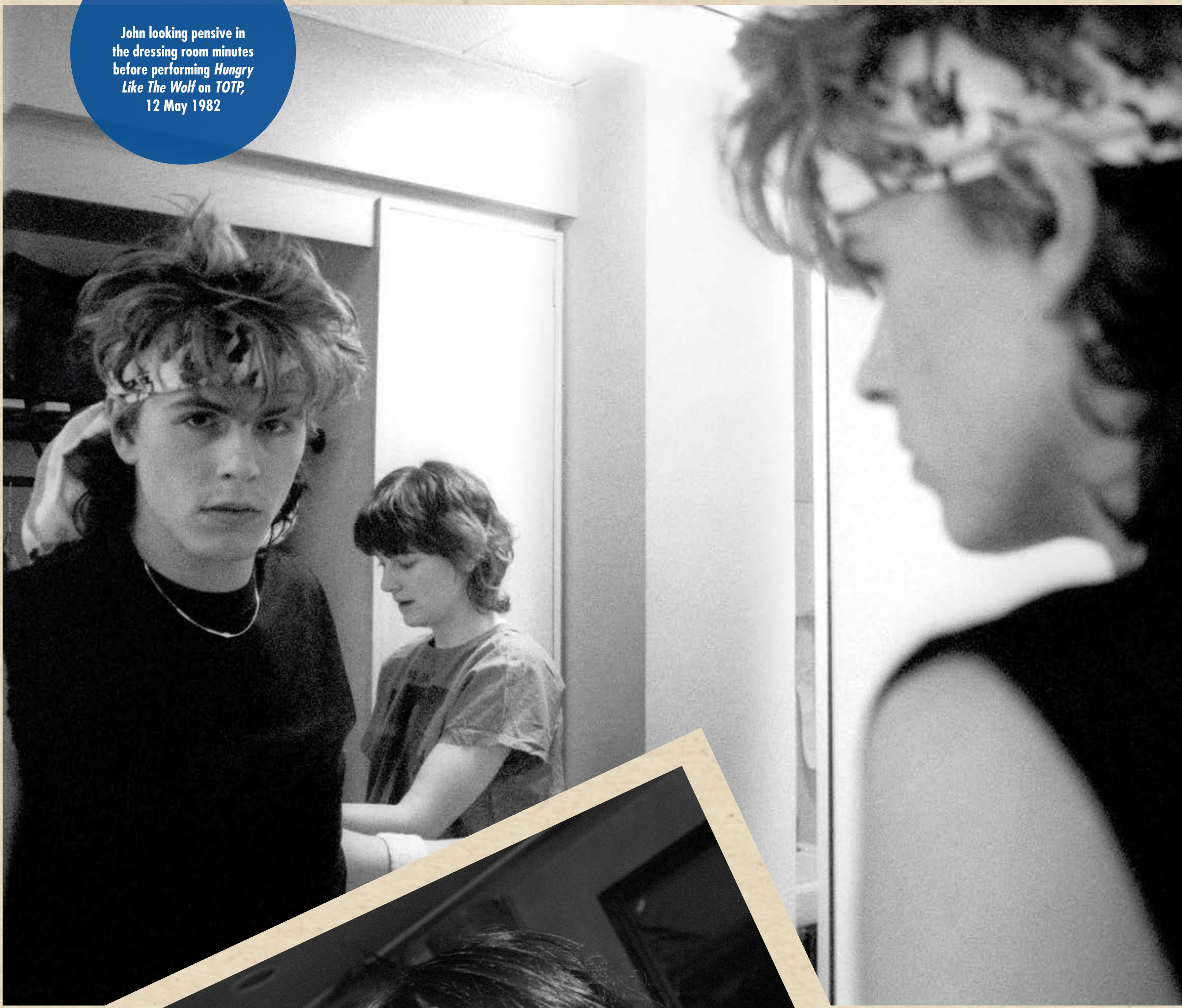
JUSTIN THOMAS

Andy sits on a flightcase while Simon Le Bon plays the xylophone during recording sessions for *Rio* in AIR Studios, London, in April 1982

DURAN. DURAN.

RARE PHOTOS

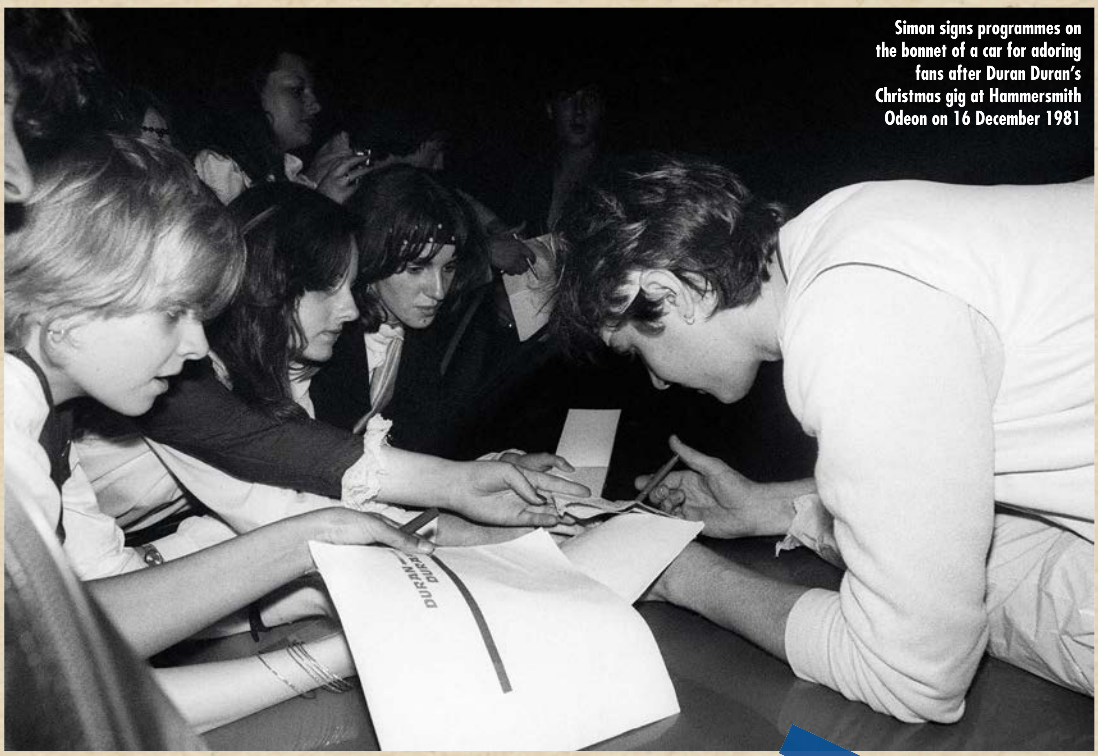
The famous five featuring, from left, John Taylor, Andy Taylor, Nick Rhodes, Simon Le Bon and Roger Taylor – pop out for a quick group shot after recording *Hungry Like The Wolf* for *Top Of The Pops* on 12 May 1982. Their landmark performance was aired the following day



John looking pensive in the dressing room minutes before performing *Hungry Like The Wolf* on *TOTP*, 12 May 1982

Nick, pictured celebrating with his girlfriend, after Duran Duran's headlining performance at London's Hammersmith Odeon on 9 July 1981. The party was held in Perry Haines' 'Dial 9' Club which was situated in the basement of the Montcalm Hotel

Producer Colin Thurston tweaks the control buttons at AIR Studios with Nick and Andy during the 1982 *Rio* sessions



Simon signs programmes on the bonnet of a car for adoring fans after Duran Duran's Christmas gig at Hammersmith Odeon on 16 December 1981

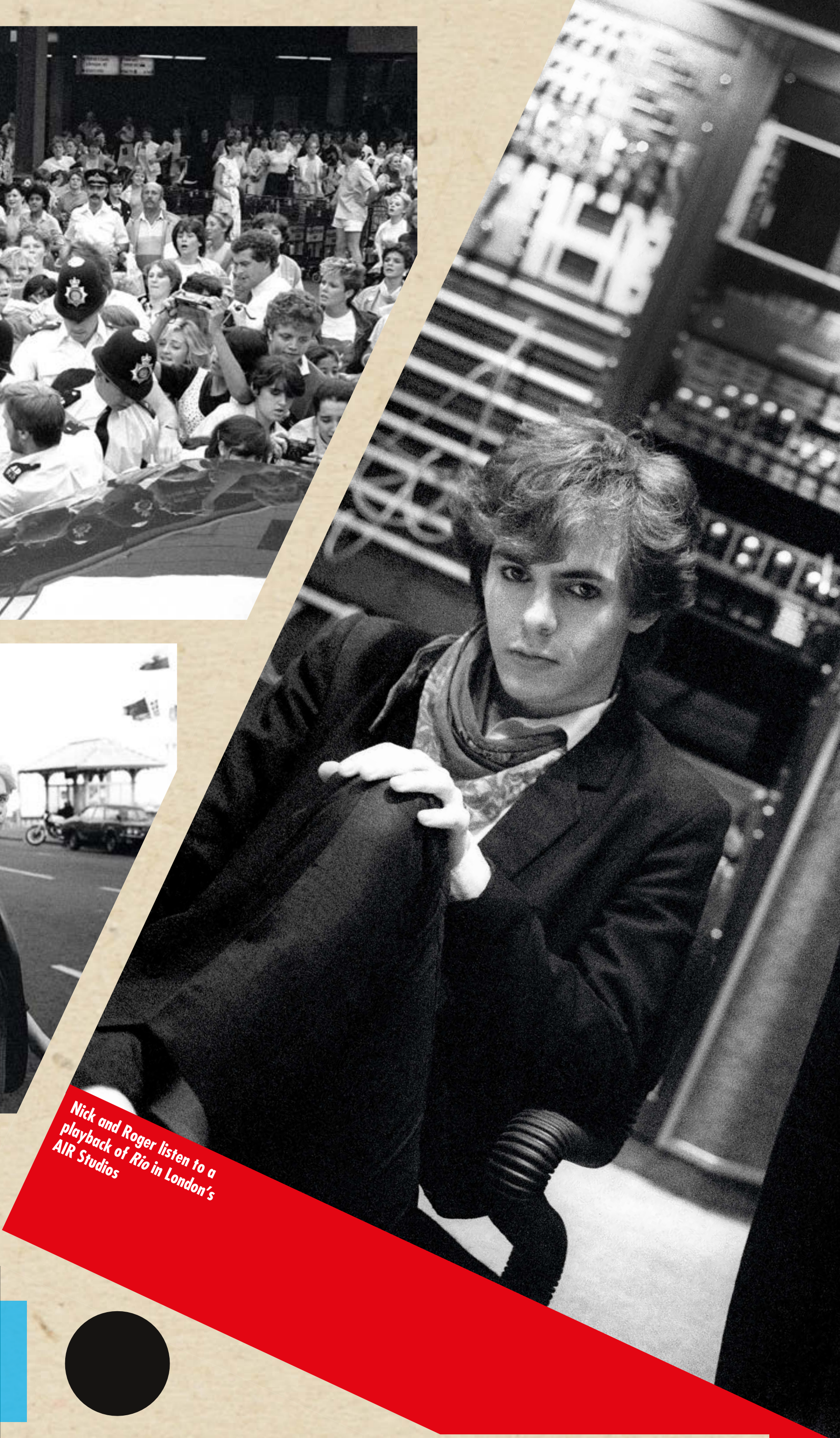
John calms his nerves by practising his tambourine skills in Duran Duran's dressing room at the Brighton Dome prior to the first show of their Faster Than Light Tour

Simon looks down the barrel of the lens during the band's first photo session for *Sounds* at Birmingham's Rum Runner club on 18 May 1981

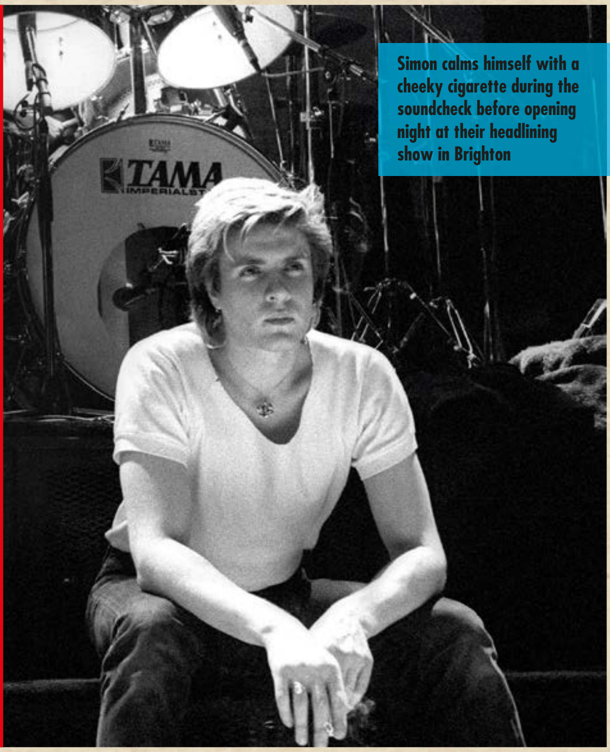
Andy bursts into a dressing room at the BBC where John is chilling before the group's Top Of The Pops performance of Hungry Like The Wolf in 1982

Police struggle to get John into a waiting car at Heathrow Airport while Nick, obscured by a policeman's helmet, straggles behind on 19 July 1983. The band has just returned from recording their third album *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* in Montserrat

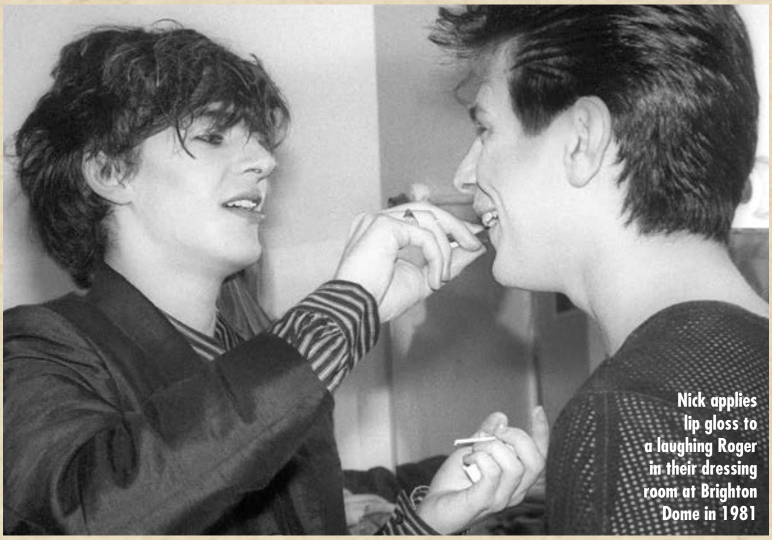
Not ALWAYS in limos: Simon, Nick and Andy walk along the Brighton seafront during a break between soundcheck and their first-night performance at The Dome on 29 June 1981



Nick and Roger listen to a playback of *Rio* in London's AIR Studios



Simon calms himself with a cheeky cigarette during the soundcheck before opening night at their headlining show in Brighton



Nick applies lip gloss to a laughing Roger in their dressing room at Brighton Dome in 1981

Simon "glams up" with a quick squirt of hairspray before their opening night performance at Brighton Dome

Nick and Simon try to get some rest in their BBC changing room before performing Hungry Like The Wolf on Top Of The Pops

Simon lays down his lead vocals and tambourine while recording *Rio* at AIR Studios in 1982

● *Kings Of The Dark Moon* by Justin Thomas is published by Hanging Around books at £9.95 and available from hangingaroundbooks.com. For more of Justin's work, visit justin-thomas-photography.myshopify.com ■

CLASSIC

ALBUM

RIO

DURAN DURAN

SECOND ALBUM SYNDROME? NOT DURAN DURAN. RIO'S VIDEOS MAY HAVE CEMENTED THE ASPIRATIONAL GLAMOUR OF THE EIGHTIES, BUT THE RECORD ITSELF WAS PACKED WITH CLASSIC SONGWRITING…

MARK LINDORES

When Duran Duran touched down on British soil having returned from their first headlining tour of the US in September 1981, they did so with a relentless fervour and enthusiasm to achieve their ambition of global domination. The trip had seen them taste the high life they craved and, with the outline of what would become their magnum opus firmly in place, Planet Earth would soon be theirs for the taking.

"That trip to America was the most exciting thing that had happened to us," Nick Rhodes told VH1 in 2002. "We had just come back when we started work on *Rio*, so that energy that you can hear throughout the record is a direct result of that trip."

Needing a follow-up to maintain the momentum of *Girls On Film*, the group went into the studio to record a standalone single, *My Own Way*. It reached No.14 in the UK and, although it wasn't meant to be on the next album, it was later re-recorded and included.

On returning from their US tour, far from being burnt out by life on the road, the band was desperate to begin their second album. "We already had a lot of material ready and we knew as soon as we started working on the songs that there was something in our chemistry that just kept coming up with more and more music," said Le Bon.

Having absorbed a wide range of influences while travelling, Duran Duran had cultivated a sound uniquely their own, amalgamating heavy funk polyrhythms, percussion effects and harmonically complex synth riffs. Though they were not part of any 'scene' that was around at the time, their distinctive sound incorporated elements of them all and was reflected in the naming of the album. "To me, 'Rio' was shorthand for the truly foreign, the exotic, a cornucopia of earthly delights, a party that would never stop," John Taylor wrote in his book *In The Pleasure Groove: Love, Death And Duran Duran*.

Once again with producer Colin Thurston at the helm, the sessions went incredibly smoothly, an outpouring of creativity bristling with energy. "It was a combination of a band at the top of its game who were just having so much fun playing together every day, with a producer who knew exactly how to channel what he was hearing," says John Taylor. Sure enough, the *Rio* sessions at London's AIR

© Getty Images

THE SONGS

1 RIO

Opening with a cataclysmic crash – actually a recording of Nick Rhodes throwing iron rods into a grand piano, played backwards – *Rio* has a driving beat, a funk-inspired bassline, rocky guitar licks and innovative arpeggiator synth sounds and displays all the trademarks of the 'Duran Duran sound'. A hybrid of an early demo, *See Me, Repeat Me* and *Stevie's Radio Station* by TV Eye (a band featuring ex-Duran singer Andy Wickett), *Rio* reached No.9 in the UK. The song has a double meaning: "Rio" is both a metaphor for America and for the band's desire to make it big there.

2 MY OWN WAY

Intended as a single-only release to bridge the gap between *Girls On Film* and the band's second album, *My Own Way* is a slice of spiky new-wave pop recorded at London's Townhouse Studios in October 1981 and released as Duran Duran's fourth single, peaking at No.14. It was remodelled and slowed down in 1982 for its inclusion on *Rio*. The song is one of the band's least favourites; it is ignored by both 1989's *Decades* and 1998's *Greatest* compilations and has rarely been performed live on any of their tours.

3 LONELY IN YOUR NIGHTMARE

A firm fan favourite, this downbeat, guitar-driven affair perfectly showcases Andy Taylor's skills. It was remixed by David Kershenbaum for the US album, with extra lyrics and longer instrumental sections. A singles video was shot, but the plan was vetoed and it was only included on the *Duran Duran* video album. The shoot took place in London and Sri Lanka alongside the *Hungry Like The Wolf* and *Save A Prayer* videos.

4 HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

According to Andy, this was the result of "fiddling with the new technology that was starting to come in". Completed in one day, it featured a Roland TR-808 drum machine and a Roland Jupiter 8 synth, plus a Le Bon lyric comparing the pursuit of a lover to the wolf from *Red Riding Hood*. The song took Duran Duran's career to a new level, reaching No.6 in the UK. Six months later, a remixed version reached No.3 on the Billboard Hot 100.

5 HOLD BACK THE RAIN

An all-time Duran Duran highlight, this perfect fusion of stadium rock and punky pop was written during the US tour as a plea from Le Bon to John Taylor to curb his hard partying. Simon wrote the lyrics on a sheet of paper and put them under the door of John's hotel room; they have never discussed them to this day. As a B-side to *Save A Prayer* the song garnered heavy airplay, leading many to hail it the great "lost Duran Duran single".

6 NEW RELIGION

The closest Duran Duran ever got to John Taylor's dream of blending punk with Chic, *New Religion* mixed dark synths and guitars with a funk-driven bassline inspired by *Stay* from David Bowie's *Station To Station*. Lyrically, the song is "a dialogue between the ego and the alter-ego", translated by using multi-tracked vocals to represent the protagonist's inner turmoil.

7 LAST CHANCE ON THE STAIRWAY

Perhaps the most overlooked song on *Rio*, *Last Chance On The Stairway* is an ode to sexual desire, lifted by a superb guitar solo from Andy Taylor and a hint of the bizarre (a marimba?!). The hook-laden melody and perfect lyrical structure are testament to how tightly Duran Duran were operating as songwriters and musicians at this point. Any track from *Rio* could have become a Top 10 hit, and this underrated gem is no exception.

8 SAVE A PRAYER

As Duranmania began to explode, *Save A Prayer*, though a ballad, was just too good to leave languishing on an album. The lush melody, the multi-layered harmonies, Nick's exotic synths, Andy's guitar and Simon's melancholic vocals all built into a glorious yearning chorus; it's a resounding pop triumph which evokes Roxy Music, and it is perhaps their greatest moment. Le Bon's lyrics are a lament to seduction culminating in the live-for-the-moment line "Some people call it a one-night-stand, but we can call it paradise". Reaching No.2, it was their biggest UK hit to date, only kept from the top spot by Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger*.

9 THE CHAUFFEUR

Originating from the notebook of poetry that Simon Le Bon presented to the group at his first audition, the *Rio* version of *The Chauffeur* was very different from its demo. Originally an acoustic-based song, Nick Rhodes stripped it back and rebuilt it with a sequencer, reinventing it as the most experimental moment on the album – a sinister synth-infused comedown after the fervent non-stop energy of the rest of the album. Despite having no single release, the song is often cited as one of the band's best.

The band were heavily influenced by the New York club scene

© Getty Images

Studios produced a plethora of stadium-sized anthems that would provide the perfect soundtrack for Duran Duran to fulfil their ambitions of graduating from Hammersmith Odeon to Wembley to New York's Madison Square Garden at 12-month intervals.

Though *Rio* is marked by the triumvirate of career-defining hits *Hungry Like The Wolf, Save A Prayer* and *Rio,* a high standard is maintained throughout the album. Cuts such as *Hold Back The Rain, New Religion* or *Lonely In Your Nightmare* were likely to have been monster hits had they been released as singles, while a last-minute addition to the album, *The Chauffeur,* highlighted the band's darker, more experimental side.

Released on 10 May 1982, *Rio* reached No.2 in the UK and spawned a further three Top 10 singles, establishing Duran Duran as the biggest pop group in Britain. Although regarded as pop's hottest pin-ups, it was unusual that there was no photograph of the band on the front cover; instead, the sleeve of *Rio* carried a painting by US illustrator Patrick Nagel (they turned down an offer from Andy Warhol "because he had already done it for The Rolling Stones") with graphic design from Malcolm Garrett, resulting in one of the most famous covers of the era.

Although their meteoric rise had them marked out as The Beatles' successors in terms of Britpop ambassadors, Duran Duran were keen to hang on to the club crowd who had embraced them as a dance act with their first hits. They became one of the first bands to take advantage of the art of remixing songs, recording alternative or extended 'Night Versions' of songs, specifically for nightclubs, often available as 12" singles or EPs. "We always did the Night Versions of the songs for clubs, but at that time we had to record them live," recalls Roger Taylor. "You couldn't cut them up on the computer and make loops as you do now. We played them live, and as some of these mixes were over 10 minutes long, they were quite difficult to do. If someone made a mistake, we'd have to

THE PLAYERS

JOHN TAYLOR

Inspired to form a band by his heroes Roxy Music, co-founder Nigel John Taylor started Duran Duran with Rhodes and Stephen Duffy in 1978. After falling in love with the basslines of Chic's Bernard Edwards, he switched from guitar to bass.

NICK RHODES

Nicholas James Bates was a devote of David Bowie and the burgeoning electronic music scene, particularly Kraftwerk, when he decided to form a band with his friends as keyboard player. He named himself 'Rhodes' after the Fender electric piano. As well as being an accomplished keyboardist, he played a big role in the sound of the *Rio* album after taking on mixing duties.

ROGER TAYLOR

A keen drummer from a young age, Roger taught himself by playing along to Roxy Music, Chic and Rolling Stones records, participating in various bands in his teens before joining Duran Duran after hearing of them at the Rum Runner club. He left after Live Aid in 1985 but rejoined as a full-time member in 2001. He is also a successful DJ.

ANDY TAYLOR

Born and raised in Cullercoats in the North East of England, guitarist Andy Taylor left school to tour working men's clubs with a variety of bands before replying to an ad in *Melody Maker* and joining Duran Duran in 1980. After six years, relationship problems within the band were the catalyst for him leaving to pursue a solo career and writing and producing for other artists.

SIMON LE BON

The final member to join, Simon Le Bon was told about the group by his girlfriend, who worked at the Rum Runner. A drama student and a keen wordsmith, he turned up for his audition with a book of poetry – a major factor in him winning his place in the group as lead singer and chief lyricist.

© Getty Images

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The pop pin-ups chose a painting for the *Rio* cover…

go back to the beginning and start all over again."

The Night Versions were important for the band, particularly in the US, where Duran Duran was marketed as a dance act. As *Rio* had underperformed Stateside on its initial release, an EP of remixes, *Carnival*, was offered that met with a much better reception. Deciding to push the dance side of the band in the States, EMI hired producer David Kershenbaum to remix the album. A remix of *Hungry Like The Wolf* reached No.3 in the US, their breakthrough hit there, while the new version of the album also fared much better, peaking at No.6. Any doubts the band had as to whether they had broken America were cast aside when 12,000 fans descended on a record store signing in New York.

As visual identity was becoming a more predominant force in the industry, the aesthetics of the group became a major factor in their appeal, with the Duran HQ turning into a creative hub of music, video, fashion and design. "We really made an effort with the videos, the style and the artwork," insists Nick Rhodes. "We saw ourselves as more of a multimedia corporation than a rock band."

"To me, 'Rio' was shorthand for the truly foreign, the exotic, a cornucopia of earthly delights, a party that would never stop." JOHN TAYLOR

A meeting between director Russell Mulcahy (who had directed the video for *Planet Earth*) and Paul and Michael Berrow resulted in the decision to join the group in Sri Lanka – where they were holidaying to unwind after their US tour – and Antigua to film a series of promos originally planned as a 'video album'. This was something of a revolutionary concept. Russell, a self-confessed "frustrated film director", was assigned with creating the images that would transform the way pop music was processed. These videos were no longer just a marketing

THE BIGGER PICTURE

THE VIDEOS

Duran Duran were the first MTV posterboys, their innovative blend of supermodels, exotic locales, striking visuals and electrifying live performances acting as a blueprint for how acts would market themselves in the exciting new medium. One of the first acts to film a 'video album', they had also shot promos for *My Own Way* and *Lonely In Your Nightmare*, but it was the 'Tropical Trilogy' and *The Chauffeur* that affirmed their status as pioneers. "[The advent of] the music video really worked well for us," says Simon Le Bon. "It made it possible to create a cult of personality across the globe."

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

Director RUSSELL MULCAHY

Based on films such as *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and *Apocalypse Now*, this "four-minute movie" by Russell Mulcahy cast Simon Le Bon as "Indiana Jones wanting to get laid". Simon was forced to wear a hat after a mistake applying his highlights the night before the shoot turned his hair bright yellow. In 1984, *Hungry Like The Wolf* was the first-ever winner of a Music Video Grammy.

youtu.be/oOg5VxrRTi0

SAVE A PRAYER

Director RUSSELL MULCAHY

Duran Duran were criticised for promoting "unattainable lifestyles", but the far-flung locations saved money: the cost of the three Sri Lankan videos was just £55,000. There were incidents: Andy was hospitalised with suspected malaria, while Roger risked injury when his elephant responded to another's mating call and charged downstream. He emerged unscathed.

youtu.be/6Uxc9eFcZyM

RIO

Director RUSSELL MULCAHY

On arrival in Antigua, Duran Duran realised that they had nothing to wear for the shoot, so they went ahead in their silk Antony Price suits. The sartorial mistake turned out to be a masterstroke, defining the band's image. *Rio* encapsulated everything that they were about… a glorious depiction of Eighties excesses: girls, glamour, yachts, sunshine and fashion, all set to a high-octane soundtrack.

youtu.be/e3W6yf6c-FA

THE CHAUFFEUR

Director IAN EAMES

The night to *Rio*'s day, *The Chauffeur* – never released as a single – was given a dark, erotic monochrome video, shot as an homage to Helmut Newton with nods to Charlotte Rampling in *The Night Porter*. It's one of their best-known clips, although none of the band appear in it. Featuring Hot Gossip dancer Perri Lister, the erotic S&M-inspired video features models dressing seductively in lingerie before being driven to an underground car park for a lesbian encounter.

youtu.be/YlGyynTzT7I

Two Taylors, one mic, no relation

tool to promote a single: Russell's vision – with James Bond and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* as reference points – was for a series of 'mini movies'.

Hungry Like The Wolf, Save A Prayer and *Rio* all garnered heavy rotation on the new 24-hour music station MTV and made Duran Duran the first idols of the video age. The channel gave them a platform to create a vivid visual landscape in which they portrayed themselves as Price-clad pop playboys, pursued across tropical seas by body-painted beauties.

As Britain faded to grey, gripped by a recession, record numbers of unemployment and the Falklands War, these vibrant videos proved the perfect antidote to the bleak times. "We didn't have an axe to grind, we didn't have a political agenda," says John Taylor. "We just wanted to have fun and wanted everyone around us to have fun."

> "We didn't have an axe to grind, we didn't have a political agenda. We just wanted to have fun and we wanted everyone around us to have fun."
> **JOHN TAYLOR**

With eventual sales of six million copies, the success of *Rio* launched Duran Duran to the top of pop's premier league. The epitome of style and substance, they were at the forefront of the second British invasion of America, where they were dubbed the "prettiest boys in pop" and "the Fab Five", while back home they sparked scenes of hysteria that hadn't been seen since Beatlemania, with John Taylor's five-year residency at the top of the Most Fanciable Male category in the Smash Hits Winners Poll confirming him as the band's heart-throb.

After three decades of hits, *Rio* is regarded by the band, their fans, and their former nemeses the critics as a pop classic and the pinnacle of Duran Duran's career.

Writing in his autobiography, John Taylor describes the album as "the sound of what happens when a group of passionate, music-loving, fame-hungry guys are given some support, nurtured and put to work harder than any of them thought possible. Every one of us is performing on the *Rio* album at the peak of our talents. THAT is what makes it so exciting." ■

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CLASSIC ALBUM

SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER

AFTER SAILING THEIR WAY TO SUPERSTARDOM WITH RIO, DURAN DURAN'S THIRD ALBUM SAW THEM THREATENED WITH BECOMING VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN SUCCESS. IN DANGER OF BEING OVEREXPOSED, THEY SAVED THEIR REPUTATIONS – AND THEIR MONEY – BY SPENDING THE YEAR ABROAD…

MARK LINDORES

After a whirlwind two years which had seen them release two albums, tour the world twice, become video age posterboys and spark scenes of fan hysteria, Duran Duran were firmly established as one of the biggest bands in the world. However, as Duranmania reached its zenith, the group was perilously close to implosion due to constant scrutiny into their personal lives – be it from the press or the ardent acolytes that followed their every move with militant accuracy. As the band began work on its third album early in 1983, the decision was made to write and record abroad to avoid a burgeoning backlash and a hefty tax bill.

"It's an adventure story about a little commando team," Simon told *Rolling Stone*. "The *Seven* is for us – the five band members and the two managers – and the *Ragged Tiger* is success. Seven people running after success. It's ambition – that's what it's about."

As many of the songs from the first two albums had been written around the same time and recorded close together with the same producer, Duran Duran and Paul and Michael Berrow agreed a change of sound would be beneficial to illustrate both their musical progression and the story of their success.

"We decided on a change production-wise because we wanted a different sound," Nick Rhodes says. "Instead of Colin Thurston, we worked with Ian Little, who had worked on *Is There Something I Should Know?* and Alex Sadkin, who had done great stuff with Grace Jones, the Thompson Twins and Bob Marley. The combination worked extremely well for us. Alex worked really well with rhythm, which was something we hadn't exploited to its full potential within the band before. At that point, it was definitely the most rhythmic thing we'd done."

Escaping to a three-storey chateau outside Cannes in the south of France, the band, along with Little, set up a writing camp, taking a 24-track mobile studio from London's RAK studios and beginning writing and recording lengthy jam sessions before listening to them back, cherry-picking segments and ideas and using them as a foundation on which to build new songs. Little had learnt the technique while working on Roxy Music's *Avalon*, and he deployed it to great effect on Duran Duran's music.

"That was the first time we'd done anything like that," Nick says. "The songs were built rather than written. On *Union Of The Snake*, I started off putting down a pattern all the way through, then another pattern, and then a third. Then as I played them back I could press a button and punch in and out, switching between the three patterns at different points, and that resulted in a very interesting arrangement. Then Simon could see where he wanted to put the vocal parts, where the bridges and the choruses should go."

After three months of demo work in Cannes, the band moved to Montserrat's AIR Studios for six weeks, where Alex Sadkin took over main production duties. "EMI was getting nervous about me and the band co-producing the album, and to be honest I was

TRACKLISTING

SIDE A

The Reflex
New Moon On Monday
(I'm Looking For) Cracks In The Pavement
I Take The Dice
Of Crime And Passion

SIDE B

Union Of The Snake
Shadows On Your Side
Tiger Tiger
The Seventh Stranger

THE PLAYERS

RELEASED
21 November 1983

LABEL
EMI (UK) and Capitol (U.S.)

PRODUCED BY
Alex Sadkin, Ian Little and Duran Duran

ENGINEERS
Phil Thornally and Peter Schwier

RECORDED AT
AIR Studios, Montserrat

PERSONNEL
Simon Le Bon – lead vocals; Nick Rhodes – keyboards; Andy Taylor – guitars; John Taylor – bass guitar; Roger Taylor – drums; Andy Hamilton – soprano and tenor saxophone; Raphael DeJesus – percussion; Mark Kennedy – percussion; Michelle Cobbs – additional vocals and BJ Nelson – additional vocals

a little bit out of my depth, so the decision was taken to use Alex," Little recalls. "I was devastated. I went to the band's management and said 'You can't do this to me. I'll be finished,' and they said 'We're sorry, but this is a big project and we can't risk it, so you're out.' The band members all appeared to want me involved, but they weren't prepared to stand up to their managers or to EMI, so I went to Alex and he said 'From what I can see you're like a sixth member of this band. I won't do it without you.' He needn't have done that – from a financial standpoint he would have been better off if I wasn't involved, but that shows what kind of person he was; an absolute gentleman [Alex died in a car crash in 1987]. But he also wasn't an idiot, and this signalled a recognition on his part that I was an integral part of Duran Duran's work process at that time. I didn't get writing credits and I don't believe I deserved them, but I know I helped come up with ideas during that time."

Now that the band was favouring a more dance-oriented direction, Duran Duran saw the album as an opportunity to take risks and evolve from their *Rio* sound. *Is There Something I Should Know?* became a blueprint for the sound of the record, along with recent favourites such as David Bowie's *Let's Dance* (which influenced *Union Of The Snake* in particular).

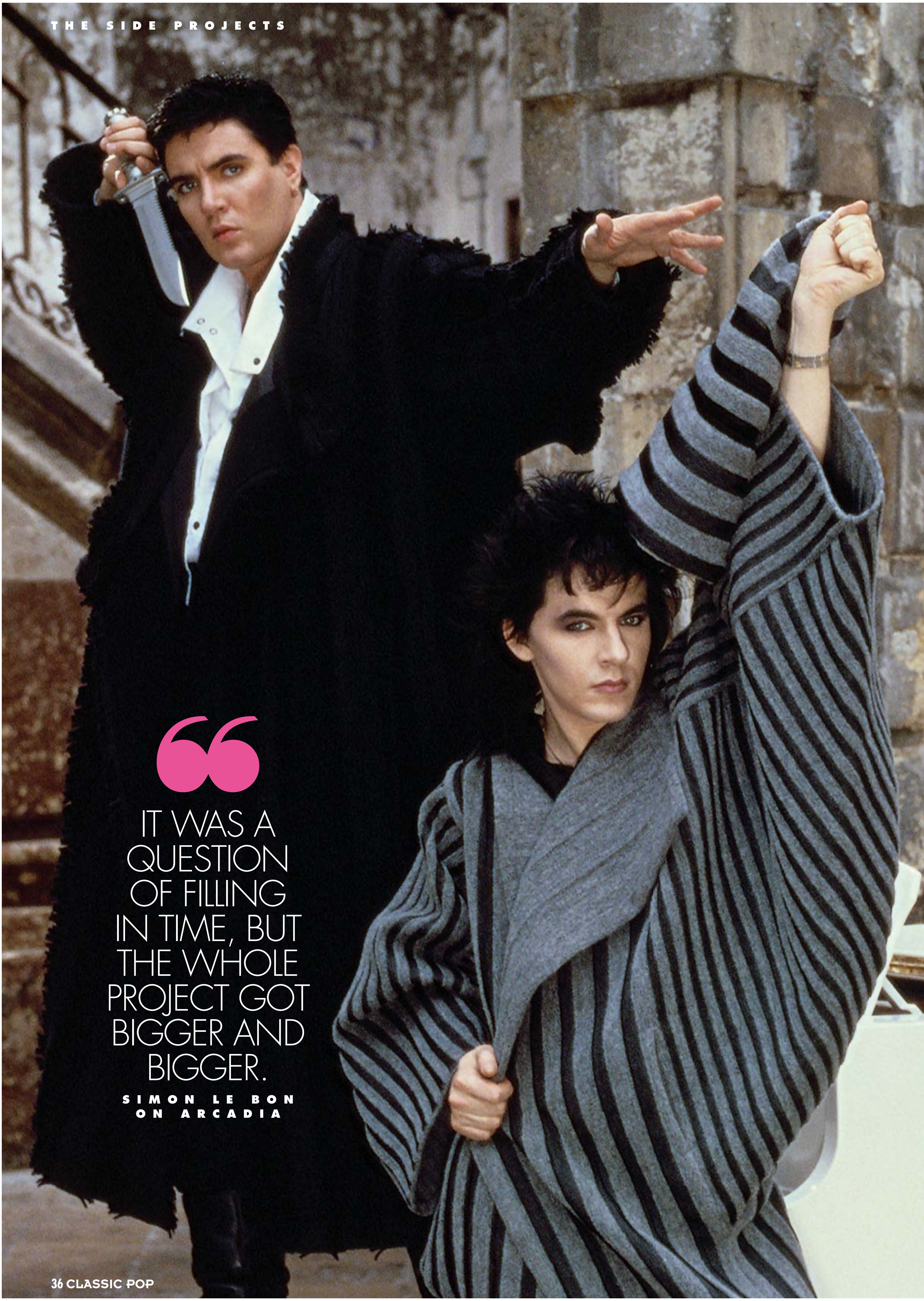
As the album was nearing completion in Montserrat, recording was interrupted after Nick Rhodes fell ill and was airlifted to hospital suffering from complications due to an irregularly fast heartbeat. The band also flew back to the UK to perform two charity concerts – one in Birmingham's Villa Park in aid of MENCAP, and a Prince's Trust Benefit Concert on special request from their fan Princess Diana.

"We sent *The Reflex* to Nile Rodgers and he turned it into something extraordinary, with all the 'fleck, fleck, flecks' and the 'why-yi-yi' and all the magical things that he applied to the original recording." **JOHN TAYLOR**

After the gigs, the third phase of album sessions took them to Sydney, Australia, where they spent the rest of 1983 finishing the album and kicking off their next tour. The first single, *Union Of The Snake*, preceded *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* by a month in October 1983. It was a Top 10 hit, yet this performance was a letdown (likewise with second single *New Moon On Monday*). With the album receiving poor reviews, and their inability to promote it as much as they would have liked to due to commitments in Australia, the boys were relieved when the album went to No.1 in the UK.

For the third single, the group decided to remix *The Reflex*. As huge Chic fans, they were thrilled when Nile Rodgers agreed to rework the song. His use of samplers and mixers proved invaluable, giving Duran Duran their biggest hit to date.

"We didn't really nail it on the album… we were, like, 'There's a hit song in there somewhere,' but we didn't get it," John recalls. "When the album came out, it was a little underwhelming that there was no obvious follow-up to *Hungry Like The Wolf* or *Save A Prayer* but we sent the song to Nile and said, 'Could you do anything with this?' And then he turned it into something extraordinary, with all the 'fleck, fleck, flecks' and the 'why-yi-yi' and all the magical things that he applied to the original recording. Then we did something wacky with the live video and… yeah, we were still in the game. Back in the game again!" ■



> "IT WAS A QUESTION OF FILLING IN TIME, BUT THE WHOLE PROJECT GOT BIGGER AND BIGGER.
>
> SIMON LE BON ON ARCADIA

EXCESS ALL AREAS!

IF THERE'S A SCHISM THAT EXISTS WITHIN THE RANKS OF DURAN DURAN, IT WAS MOST OBVIOUSLY VISIBLE IN THEIR WILDLY DIFFERING SPLINTER GROUPS, THE POWER STATION AND ARCADIA. CLASSIC POP TAKES A LOOK AT THESE INTRIGUING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES…

STEVE HARNELL

Simon and Nick with Roger as Arcadia, the ethereal side of the Duran division: "You had the arty end and the rock end," Roger later told The Quietus. "A kind of parting of the ways."
© Getty Images

Funk rock, members of Chic, a William S Burroughs cameo and mountains of cocaine – when Duran Duran do side projects, they don't do them by halves. Born from a band hiatus in 1984, The Power Station and Arcadia revealed two factions within the mothership, showcasing a tough rock-led approach on one hand and an art school dandyism on the other.

Both John and Andy Taylor were on board for The Power Station, in essence a neat encapsulation of the bassist's original vision for Duran as a "Sex Pistols meets Chic outfit". With Nile Rodgers now making a name for himself as a super-producer hitmaker for the likes of Bowie and Madonna, his former Chic bandmates – drummer Tony Thompson and bassist and co-songwriter Bernard Edwards – were at a loose end and soon joined forces with the Taylors, intrigued by the musical cross-pollination that was floating in the wind.

Meanwhile, across the fence, Nick Rhodes, Simon Le Bon and Roger Taylor formed Arcadia (although

Nick Rhodes, circa 1985: Arcadia took its cues from the delicate side of Duran, epitomised by songs like *The Chauffeur* and *Seventh Stranger*

© Alamy

THE REVOLUTION WAS TELEVISED!

NICK RHODES DESCRIBED HIS EARLY/MID NINETIES TV MANIA EXPERIMENTATION AS "SOCIAL JUNK CULTURE TRIPTYCH OPERA"

the latter had a foot in both camps and provided percussion for The Power Station on occasion, too). Diametrically opposed to the strident rock of their counterparts, Arcadia was a more melodic and delicate affair – Le Bon went as far as saying the band's debut long-player was "the most pretentious album ever made".

While the two bands' ambitions may have swerved in different directions, they had one thing in common – a devil-may-care extravagance where every artistic whim in the studio was fully indulged. The Duran boys had earned the right for vanity projects, and they exploited that opportunity to the maximum.

GET YOURSELF UNTIED

Seven And The Ragged Tiger caused some dissent within the ranks. John Taylor in particular had a problem with the over-fussiness and detail-oriented approach of producer Alex Sadkin, so a chance to flex his funk and rock muscles couldn't come soon enough. After the success of the Nile Rodgers remix of *The Reflex*, he was fully in the orbit of Chic and its members, but it was only when John and Andy Taylor met Tony Thompson after a Bowie concert in France in May 1983 – Thompson was behind the drums for the Serious Moonlight Tour – that an idea for a collaboration began to percolate. Within a year, the nucleus for what became The Power Station was in place (they convened under the working title Big Brother until it was noted that Janis Joplin's backing band had essentially taken that name already). The trio gathered to record a backing track for a cover of T.Rex's glam rock classic *Get It On* for model and singer Bebe Buell, whom John was briefly dating. With Bernard Edwards also in tow, the signs were good – but when Taylor and Buell fell out, the sessions came to nothing.

With the vocalist-free band all dressed up with nowhere to go, a revolving-chair position was considered for the frontman role, with various singers guesting on an ad hoc basis. Remarkably, Mick Jagger was approached, as was Richard Butler from The Psychedelic Furs and Billy Idol. The group, it was planned, would provide a rock twist on the soundsystem multiple-singer approach later adopted by the likes of Massive Attack and Soul II Soul.

But when Robert Palmer – a favourite vocalist of Duran Duran, who was still yet to enter his Eighties imperial chart crossover phase – entered the fray, all bets were off. An outstanding performance on the pre-existing *Get It On* backing track sealed the deal. He was their man. The Chic contingent were convinced, and the Bolan cover went on to be a standout on their debut album.

That LP cost a cool $500,000 in studio fees. An enormous cocaine intake characterised the sessions, with John Taylor in particular taking full advantage of what he described as an "unlimited" supply. Recorded in London, Nassau and at The Power Station in New York – the studio from which they took their name – *The Power Station* was a cocksure collection of cavernous gated drums, slashing, almost heavy metal guitars, John Taylor's pumping basslines, and Palmer's commanding vocals. Lead single *Some Like It Hot* was

© Getty Images

Robert Palmer, a full 12 years older than the Taylors, benefitted from the commercial boost to his career provided by working with The Power Station

It may have slipped under the radar of some Duran fans, but Nick Rhodes' side project TV Mania – a long-running collaboration with former band guitarist Warren Cuccurullo, all done in Duran Duran downtime – racked up more than 60 songs over the years. Also on board were the band's keyboard tech Mark Tinley plus producer and multi-instrumentalist Anthony J Resta, while the material included patchwork samples of television shows.

The quartet ran from 1996 until Cuccurullo's dismissal from Duran Duran in 2001, and work by the quartet had an influence on tracks on *Medazzaland* and also appeared in the 2004 movie *Trollywood*. In 2013, a full TV Mania album called *Bored With Prozac And The Internet?* – thought for many years to have been lost – was released on vinyl and in a limited edition boxset via the Vinyl Factory. Digital incarnations were available through The Orchard/Beatport.

***The Power Station*, as its sleeve noted with refreshing candour, was "conceived and written in Paris, Nassau, London and various bars around the world"**

an impressive calling card and although the reviews were mixed, the chart results – particularly in the States – were positive. The album made No.6 on the Billboard chart and *Some Like It Hot* achieved the same position in the Stateside singles rundown.

Palmer soon capitalised on his increased public profile, releasing a new solo album, *Riptide,* in 1985 that included the imperious *Addicted To Love*. But when the singer bailed on live commitments with The Power Station, he was replaced by Michael Des Barres. Then the fingers began to point, with Palmer being accused of using the supergroup for his own ends, both financially and professionally. Firing back, Palmer told *Number One* magazine: "Firstly, I didn't need the money and secondly, the cash wasn't exactly a long time coming. It wasn't exactly an experience that set me up for retirement." He later added: "I gave The Power Station [their] sound. They took it from me, not the other way around."

Des Barres' tenure with the band was short-lived, although he did have the honour of appearing with them at the Philadelphia leg of Live Aid, where they played *Murderess* and *Get It On*.

Although the Robert Palmer collaboration had ended in acrimony, the bad blood was put aside a decade later when the original members reunited for a new album. The harmony, however, soon evaporated, and John Taylor left the sessions for what eventually became 1996's *Living In Fear* amid an array of personal problems. Bernard Edwards stepped out from behind the mixing desk to become the band's full-time bassist, only to pass away suddenly later that year of pneumonia during a trip to Japan.

MAXIMUM BIG SURPRISE

If The Power Station were renowned for their Class A indulgence, their counterparts in Arcadia were not be outdone – at least, not on an artistic level. Their debut album *So Red The Rose* was recorded at a cost of $1 million, making it at that point one of the most expensive efforts of all time.

With Arcadia retaining both a synth-based sound and producer Alex Sadkin, this was on the face of it less of a divergence from the Duran template than The Power Station, yet it jumped into experimental waters with both feet. Both Rhodes and Le Bon have at various times admitted to (and revelled in) its almost unrivalled pretentiousness. This was, after all, a band that took its name from a Poussin painting of 1638, *Et In Arcadia Ego* (*The Arcadian Shepherd*), which was itself influenced by Virgil's *Ecologues* and would become a future touchstone of WH Auden, Evelyn Waugh, Goethe and Nietzsche.

The lead-off single – the wonderful *Election Day* – boasted an epic nine-minute mini-movie directed by *Alien*'s art director Roger Christian and was inspired by French auteur Jean Cocteau's *La Belle Et La Bete*, no less. Like many tracks on the album, it featured a high-profile collaborator, in this case Grace Jones, who added a mysterious spoken-word section. Pink Floyd's David Gilmour and Bowie sideman Carlos Alomar provided guitar, while jazz legend Herbie Hancock weighed in with keyboards on *The Promise* (that's Sting on backing vocals, by the way).

So Red The Rose, recorded in Paris, has aged well but it only charted at No.23 in the US and No.30 in the UK, and after the success of *Election Day* the subsequent singles barely made a dent in the charts. The gothic, dyed-hair look the trio adopted, along with tuxedos, bow ties and vintage suits, made more of an impression than most of the music.

Arcadia made a handful of appearances to plug *So Red The Rose,* but never toured. As a nod to the band and sister act The Power Station, *Election Day* and *Some Like It Hot* made it onto the setlist of the Notorious Tour… a slim legacy for two intriguing side projects that deserve further investigation. ■

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CLASSIC

ALBUM

NOTORIOUS

RETURNING FROM THEIR HIATUS DIMINISHED IN SIZE AND STATURE, THE THREE-MAN DURAN DURAN RECRUITED TWO NEW MEMBERS AND TURNED TO NILE RODGERS TO HELP THEM GET THEIR GROOVE BACK, RESULTING IN THEIR FUNKIEST WORK TO DATE…

MARK LINDORES

Following Duran Duran's mid-Eighties hiatus during which they indulged their musical infidelities in the form of The Power Station, Arcadia and solo experiments, the group's planned reunion in 1986 was not what any of them had expected. As well as being down to a three-piece following the departures of Andy and Roger Taylor, the band had split from long-term managers Paul and Michael Berrow, the Birmingham brothers that had guided them to global stardom.

It wasn't just the band itself that had changed – the pop world had undergone a seismic shift post-Live Aid, developing a social conscience that rendered the vulgarity of globe-trotting playboys flaunting their wealth and excesses in everyone's faces null and void. Meanwhile, in the land of the teen mags that Duran Duran once ruled, Norwegian trio A-ha had stolen the hearts of Britain's teenage girls with their impossibly catchy hits and heartthrob lead singer Morten Harket, causing many to question what the future held for Le Bon and Co.

As the band regrouped to discuss their fourth studio album, they were essentially a four-piece. Roger Taylor had made it clear from the offset that he wanted to leave the band and the music business altogether. Burnt out after half a decade of mass hysteria and intense scrutiny, he moved to a farm to instil normality back into his life.

Andy Taylor was trickier. After weeks of uncertainty as to whether he was rejoining or not, he left without telling the others. Then he assembled a legal team to conduct his departure, at one point even attempting to stop the band using the Duran name.

"Andy really messed us around," Simon recalls. "It made the whole artistic process really difficult because we had to have meetings with lawyers at 10 in the morning, and these would drag on, then we'd try to get on with work, but it was hard to get into creative mode after that."

Though Andy's departure had a negative impact creatively, John Taylor remembers the remaining three members bonding closer than before. "It galvanised us," he says. "We had gone on our own paths with The Power Station and Arcadia, but our relationships after that moved to a whole new level, because we were now just three, fighting to survive. Like one of those soccer teams down to 10 men – stronger, more determined, more focused. Less can be more. That was the silver lining."

Though the trio had begun writing and recording in London and France, they had no clear direction for the record. Demoing tracks, some of which would survive, they nicknamed them after Hitchcock films for identification purposes. Their only criteria for the record was that it was to be a Duran funk album. With that in mind, they asked Nile Rodgers to fill in as guitarist, not wanting to recruit permanent new members as they were still unsure whether the situation with Andy would be resolved.

"I always describe Duran Duran as my second band after Chic," Rodgers told *Spinner*. "I think that we were the right pairing at the right time. I don't like to overly take credit for anything, but since they said it first… Had I not been there in their lives at that pivotal time of their lives, when we did *Notorious*, when the two other Taylors left, that's a heavy blow to a band at the top of their career.

"I think I was the glue that held that together. I used to say to the guys, 'People don't realise how great you are. You're still like this boy band and the girls are still talking about your looks, and the music becomes sort of an added bonus. Now it's time to go in the direction where you can become more like a U2 that's really classic and solid artistically. You gotta build that foundation, and let's take the fans along with us.' And that's what the *Notorious* album was supposed to do."

With Rodgers on board as guitarist (and later taking

TRACKLISTING

SIDE A
- Notorious
- American Science
- Skin Trade
- A Matter Of Feeling
- Hold Me

SIDE B
- Vertigo (Do The Demolition)
- So Misled
- Meet El Presidente
- Winter Marches On
- Proposition

THE PLAYERS

RELEASED
18 November 1986

LABEL EMI (UK), Capitol (US)

PRODUCED BY
Duran Duran, Nile Rodgers

ENGINEER
Daniel Abraham

RECORDED AT
Davout Studios; West Side Studios; Maison Rouge Studios; AIR Studios; Abbey Road Studios and Skyline Studios

PERSONNEL
Simon Le Bon – lead vocals; Andy Taylor – guitar; John Taylor – bass guitar; Nick Rhodes – keyboards; Steve Ferrone – drums; Warren Cuccurullo – guitar; Nile Rodgers – guitar; The Borneo Horns – horns; Jimmy Maelen – percussion; Curtis King – background vocals; Brenda White-King – background vocals; Tessa Niles – background vocals; Cindy Mizelle – background vocals

on production duties), they completed their line-up with Warren Cuccurullo (who had contacted the band and offered his services after Andy Taylor informed him he'd left the group) and drummer Steve Ferrone. These incoming members combined with the originals' new-found renewed vigour and passion to ignite a fresh creative flare.

The title track, one of the first to be written, set the tone for the rest of the record. "*Notorious* was such an important song for us, because Simon, Nick, and I were left holding the flame, sort of wondering, 'Can we keep this going? Can we maintain the momentum?'" John says. "We'd already taken a break and we knew we weren't the biggest band in the world anymore, and the question was, did we have a hit in us? And, again, we have to be grateful for Nile, because Nick and Nile really sort of cooked up the main hook to the opening, the sort of guitar hook to the song. And by the time we finished it, we knew we had a song that could announce the next phase of the band's career."

Tracks such as *Skin Trade*, *Vertigo* and *American Science* displayed a loose funkiness which harked back to the disco/funk sound Rodgers had pioneered with Chic. However, unlike his work with David Bowie and Diana Ross, on which the main artists had a tendency to sound like guest performers on a Nile Rodgers record, *Notorious* retained Duran Duran's identity, with the results revealing a more balanced collaboration.

"It was patently obvious very quickly that we were going in that funk-driven direction," Simon says. "I was initially quite surprised, but I shouldn't have been, because if you listen back to tracks such as *Last Chance On The Stairway* we knew we had it in us. Once we started making the music, we didn't even think about it. The last thing on our minds was how it was going to be received. We thought it was great."

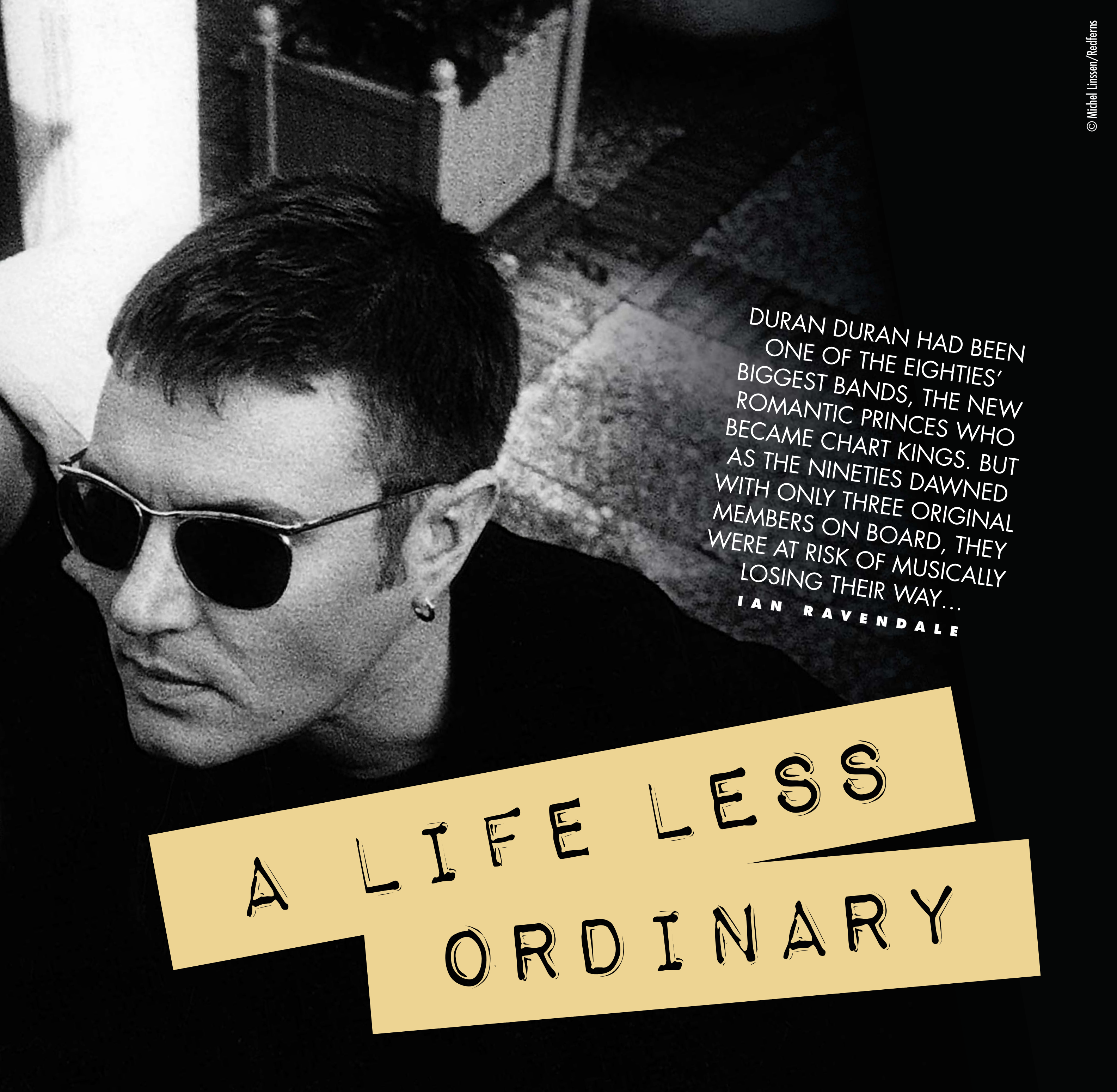
> "I used to say to the guys, 'People don't realise how great you are. You're still like this boy band and the music becomes an added bonus. Now it's time to become really classic and solid artistically.'" **NILE RODGERS**

Released in October 1986, comeback single *Notorious* reached No.7 in the UK, faring much better in the US, where it peaked at an impressive No.2. The album followed a month later and it topped out at No.16, making this the band's first album to miss the Top 10. Further disappointment came with both *Skin Trade* and *Meet El Presidente* missing the Top 20.

John Taylor felt disillusioned by the *Notorious* album's failure, having felt almost certain it would be a hit. "We felt we redefined the sound of the band in a good way," he says. "We thought the title track and *Skin Trade* were great songs. When you look back through your albums, even if they all have one great song that goes into your canon, not all of them have something unforgettable. *Notorious* in particular has done great things for us over the years."

The title track got a new lease of life in 1999 when the chorus was sampled for a posthumous song from rapper Notorious B.I.G., forming the basis of a track now considered a hip-hop classic. More than three decades after its release, it is being discovered by new generations, and the Biggie track is used as the walkout music for mixed martial arts superstar Conor McGregor.

A decade of change on the way: Warren Cuccurullo, Sterling Campbell, John Taylor, Nick Rhodes and Simon Le Bon



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A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

DURAN DURAN HAD BEEN ONE OF THE EIGHTIES' BIGGEST BANDS, THE NEW ROMANTIC PRINCES WHO BECAME CHART KINGS. BUT AS THE NINETIES DAWNED WITH ONLY THREE ORIGINAL MEMBERS ON BOARD, THEY WERE AT RISK OF MUSICALLY LOSING THEIR WAY...

IAN RAVENDALE

For Duran Duran, the Nineties didn't start well. *Violence Of Summer (Love's Taking Over)*, the initial single from 1990's *Liberty* album, struggled into the No.20 position on the UK charts even after appearances on *Top Of The Pops* and *Wogan*. *Serious*, the follow-up, only scraped into the Top 50, peaking at No.48, and neither single did well in the US. The *Liberty* LP fared slightly better, entering the chart at No.8 before making a sharp exit.

Faced with the potential embarrassment of playing to half-empty concert venues and receiving less-than-ecstatic reviews, Duran chose not to tour in support of *Liberty* and instead embarked on a promotional tour of radio and television stations in Australia and New Zealand, where they were pretty well guaranteed blanket media exposure.

Even Duran's position as the premier video band of the MTV generation was under threat. The group had made its name internationally via expensive promos filmed in exotic locations, with the Fab Five kitted out in designer clobber. Knocking off a quick studio shoot in a day could conceivably do them more harm than good and Capitol Records cancelled the videos for *First Impression* and *Liberty*, the subsequent US and UK singles. As the UK 45 was also the LP title track, it was apparent that the album was well and truly dead.

Warren Cuccurullo had joined Duran in 1986 as Andy Taylor's replacement. Having relocated to London, the guitarist had a studio built into his newly-purchased home and invited Nick Rhodes over to check out the feasibility of recording the next album there. Demos went well and EMI cautiously agreed to an advance on the proviso that they wanted to hear what the band were up to as they went along; if they liked it, more cash would be forthcoming.

The song that swung EMI was *Ordinary World* – arguably Duran's best-ever ballad – which grew

EVERY TOWN WAS AN EXCUSE FOR A BLOW-OUT. I COULD NEVER STOP AFTER ONE DRINK. IT WAS HORRIBLE.

JOHN TAYLOR

John Taylor and Amanda de Cadenet share an intimate moment at a party in the early Nineties

out of an acoustic guitar line that Cuccurullo came up with that he, Nick Rhodes, John Taylor and Simon Le Bon worked up into a song.

Away from Duran, meanwhile, Andy Taylor busied himself producing, writing and playing with the likes of Rod Stewart, Belinda Carlisle, Tony Banks and Thunder. He also bought Trident Studios in 1989 and invested in nightclubs both in Manchester and his hometown of Whitley Bay, where he opened the Rio wine bar, which boasted an aquarium filled with piranha fish. Roger Taylor, in contrast, stayed away from new projects in the music business (though he would form the electro/dance band Freebass in 1997).

LEARNING TO SURVIVE

John Taylor and Amanda de Cadenet – now parents to a baby girl they rather exotically christened Atlanta Noo – married in 1991, and moved to Lookout Mountain in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles, to escape the overly-intrusive UK press. That same year, John called Andy with the suggestion of reforming The Power Station with vocalist Robert Palmer and drummer Tony Thompson. The project didn't materialise but it did put the two Taylors back in contact with each other, eventually paving the way for the reunion of the original Duran Duran line-up.

By the early Nineties, Warren Cuccurullo had become increasingly important to Duran. He rearranged some of the outfit's back catalogue for

Duran Duran rehearsing and filming the video for *Too Much Information* in the Barker Hanger at Santa Monica airport, July 1993

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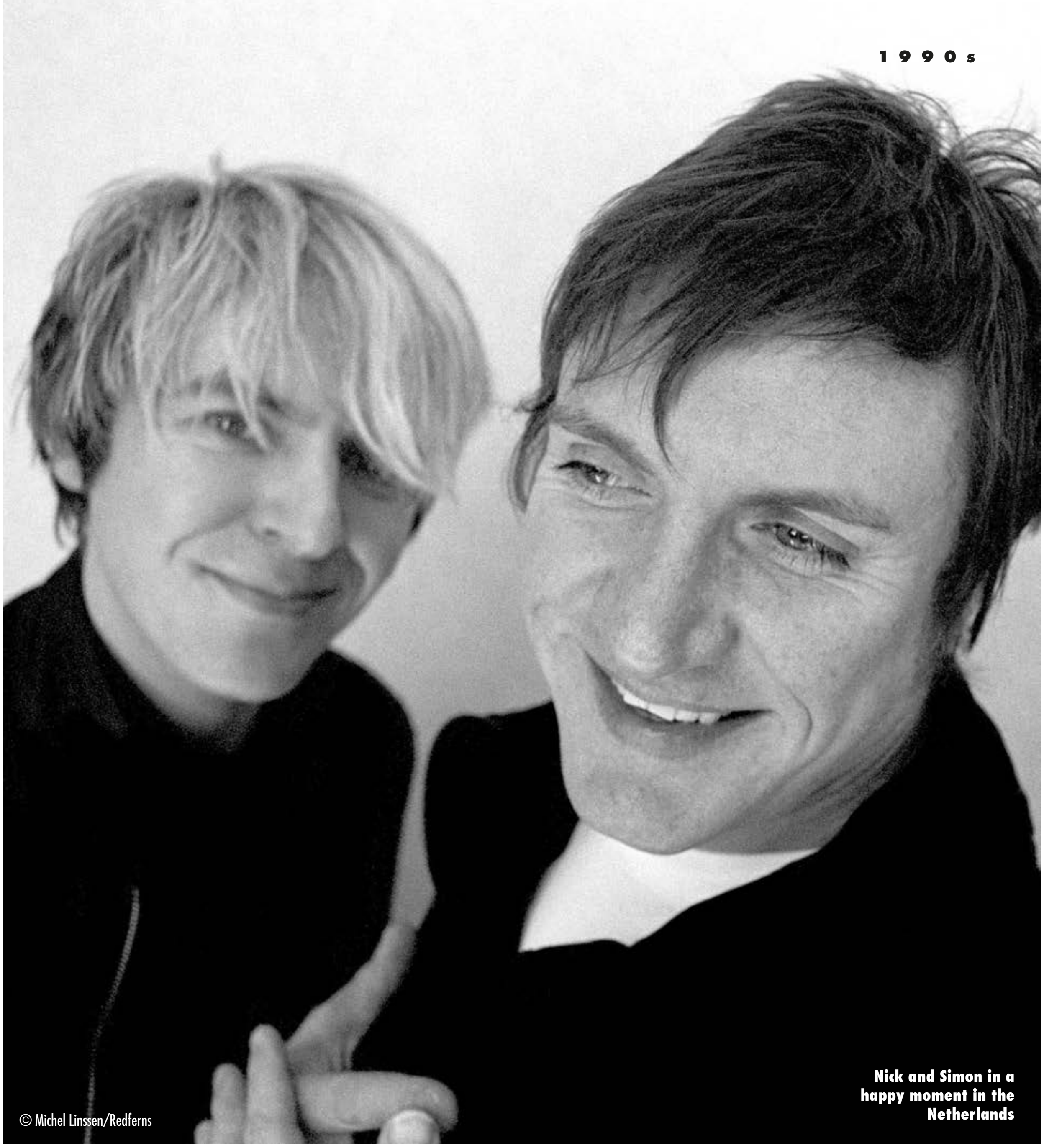

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Nick and Simon in a happy moment in the Netherlands

an uncharacteristic Duran Duran unplugged acoustic set at a festival run by an LA radio station at the end of 1992. Appearances at similar laid-back shows in Toronto and New York followed in February '93.

John Taylor, Rhodes and Le Bon re-signed with Capitol EMI and entered into a new management agreement with the LA firm Left Bank, who took care of Meatloaf, Debbie Harry and other name acts. The managers and the label were almost immediately at loggerheads. Left Bank argued that the record company were not putting enough time and resources into the band and thus the new album Duran had been working on shouldn't be released.

To resolve the conflict, Capitol leaked the *Ordinary World* track to a couple of friendly US radio stations a full three months before the proposed release date. DJs received hundreds of calls from listeners wanting to know where they could get hold of it, and the label rush-released the song as a single in January 1993.

Ordinary World became the band's biggest hit since 1986's *Notorious*, reaching No.6 in the UK and No.3 in the US and topping the charts in a dozen countries including New Zealand and Australia. All of a sudden, Duran Duran began to look like a credible band who had outgrown their teen idol roots.

This new success helped Left Bank and Capitol put aside their differences and also brought Duran back into the international album charts with the LP that featured *Ordinary World* (there was no title on the LP sleeve but the record is universally referred to as '*The Wedding Album*' because of the cover). Very much a return to form for Duran both creatively and commercially, the album sold five million copies worldwide. Duran Duran and the Nineties, it seemed, had suddenly caught up with each other.

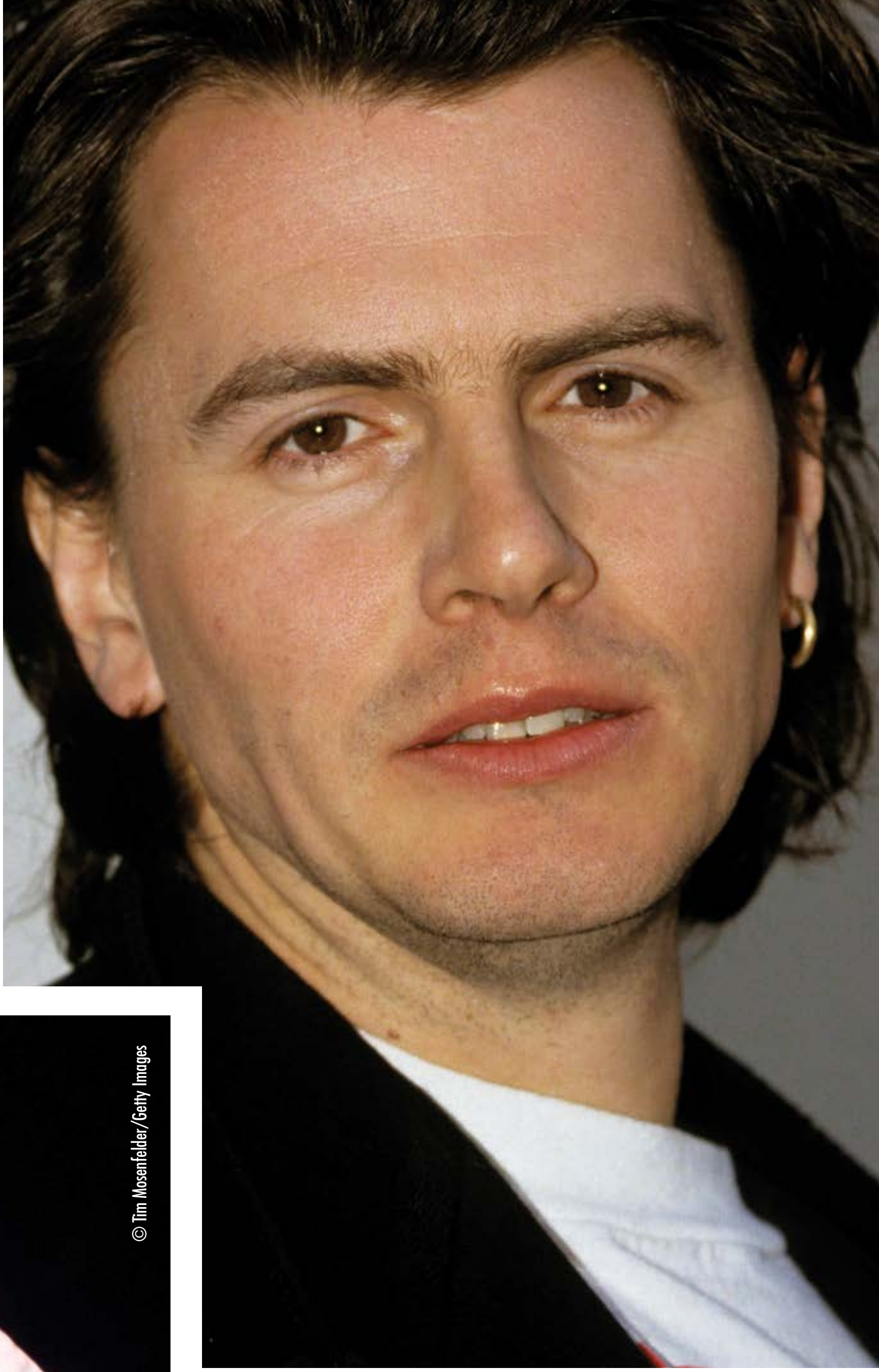
WEAR AND TEAR

On the strength of Duran's chart return, 1993's Dilate Your Mind Tour took the band around the globe and included a nine-man line-up that featured female backing singers and a string section. On the European leg, Duran made a triumphant return to home turf at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, proceeding onto London, Dublin and Glasgow.

Gigs in the Middle East were followed by a nine-date trip to South Africa. The band were one of the first western acts to perform in the country after the abolition of apartheid, and on occasion they were given armed guards. Next, in South America, Duran played to several hundred thousand people.

© Steve Granitz/WireImage

In LA, Amanda took on acting roles in films such as 1999's *Brokedown Palace*. Sadly the couple would divorce after six years

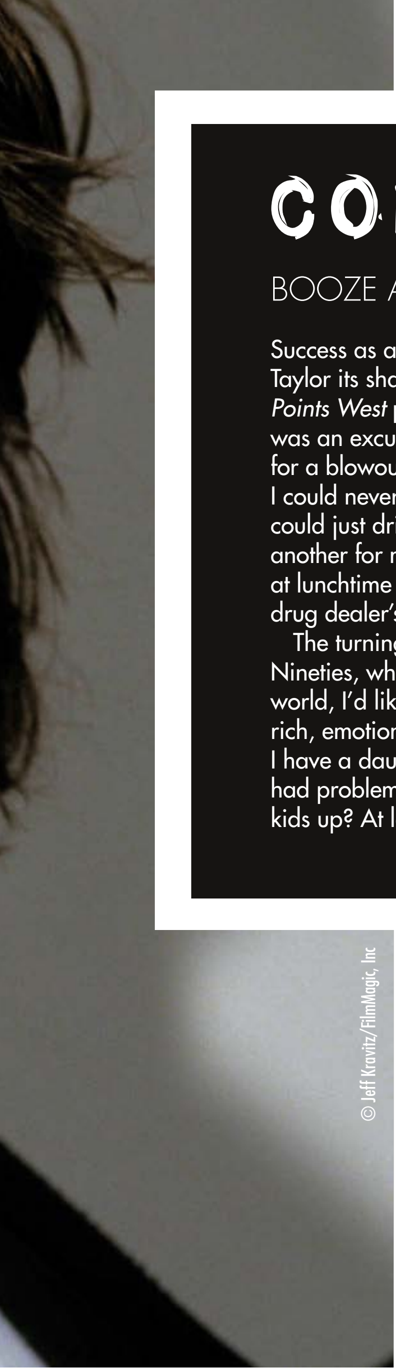


© Tim Mosenfelder/Getty Images

Simon on stage at Shoreline Amphitheatre, California, during the Radio Station Festival tour in June 1995

Unfortunately Simon Le Bon began having vocal problems, perhaps not helped by the demands of the large venues, and the September 1993 UK leg of Duran's jaunt around Europe was cancelled. The tour re-started in the US on 12 October but the singer's throat troubles surfaced once again after five dates. Le Bon was diagnosed with a torn vocal cord, and though the singer managed many shows in the rest of the year, assorted dates and an Aussie trip had to be put off. Still, Duran remained in an optimistic frame of mind and returned to the fray, finishing the year in Japan and returning to Europe – along with Israel, Turkey, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok, Malaysia and Indonesia – in early 1994.

To give themselves some creative breathing space the band decided to record an album of covers, rather in the tradition of David Bowie's *Pin-Ups* and John Lennon's *Rock'n'Roll*. Amongst the songs chosen were Lou Reed's *Perfect Day,* The Temptations' *Ball Of Confusion*, Sly and The Family Stone's *I Wanna Take You Highe*r, Bob Dylan's *Lay Lady Lay*, Elvis Costello's *Watching The Detectives* and Grandmaster Flash And The Furious Five's *White Lines (*Grandmaster Flash and his friends joined Duran on stage at Wembley Arena on 28 January 1994 to deliver a version of the



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COMING UNDONE

BOOZE AND DRUGS AND ROCK'N'ROLL…

Success as a touring rock superstar had brought John Taylor its share of temptations, as he told the BBC's *Points West* programme in June 2014: "Every town was an excuse for a blowout. Leaving was an excuse for a blowout. Arriving was an excuse for a blowout. I could never stop after one drink. A lot of my friends could just drink casually… one thing always led to another for me! A seemingly innocent glass of wine at lunchtime and I'd be on my knees in front of some drug dealer's house by midnight. It was horrible!"

The turning point for Taylor came in the mid-Nineties, when he checked into rehab. "In a perfect world, I'd like everyone to have access to the kind of rich, emotionally educative experience I had in rehab. I have a daughter and a step-daughter, and they both had problems. What are you doing to do? Lock your kids up? At least they knew what this is all about."

Talking to the *Birmingham Mail*, he revealed that group therapy was the key: "I had always thought my problems were down to either the bad choices I had made or because I was just a bad person. The idea that this might not be the case was a revelation to me. Rehab was not judgmental. Essentially, I was told that I could not process alcohol properly, and it wasn't anything I could control.

"One unexpected benefit that came from accepting that I had a disease was the dissipation of blame towards everyone and everything – myself included. Everyone in my group took part in our family therapy, and we took part in theirs. I had never been encouraged to talk so openly about my own feelings. It was mind-expanding, and very moving. I wish everyone could have an experience like that, and I will be forever grateful for it."

song). The album was recorded as and when the band had time, with producer/engineer Ken Scott flying out to wherever the group were playing.

The covers album came out in Spring 1995 entitled *Thank You*, and *White Lines* was released as the first US single, with *Perfect Day* doing the honours in the UK. Sadly, both bombed in the US charts; they did better on home territory with *White Lines* making No.17, 11 chart positions higher than the Lou Reed cover, but Duran's days of being a multi-platinum-selling singles act seemed to be over. The album shifted a respectable 500,000 copies but this was only one-tenth of the figure achieved by *The Wedding Album*.

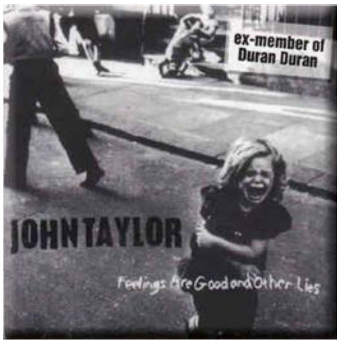
ENTRIES AND EXITS

On the positive side for Duran fans, there were signs that relations were still cordial. At one point Andy Taylor visited a Duran gig to discuss a possible Power Station reunion with John Taylor; the guitarist was spotted by enthusiastic gig-goers and had to make a hasty sprint for the dressing room. The Power Station indeed reunited in 1996, and Robert Palmer, Andy, John and Tony Thompson began writing and arranging a new album, produced by Bernard Edwards with informal assistance from his Chic cohort Nile Rodgers.

Roger Taylor made a surprise return to the Duran drum kit in January for the video of *Perfect Day* and also appeared when the band mimed the number on *Top Of The Pops* in April 1995. Alas, his former rhythm section partner John Taylor was at this point in a downward spiral, and backed out of the Power Station project only days before the band were due to sign with Polydor. Marital troubles with Amanda de Cadenet and Taylor's attempts at kicking drink and drugs and the subsequent strain of rehab had taken their toll, and Duran played February's San Remo festival in Italy without him. Backing singer and former Soul II Soul vocalist Lamya filled in on bass.

From late May until 24 June 1995, at the insistence of Capitol Records, Duran were back in the US for a series of appearances at festivals organised by radio stations. John Taylor, in particular, opposed the tour, and stormed off the stage several times. The final gig at Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, California, was only half-full, and Duran were booed. It was the last live show that Taylor would play with the outfit until the original band reunited in 2001.

John dipped his feet into solo recording and cut several songs with ex-Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones for what was eventually released as *Feelings Are Good And Other Lies*, Taylor's debut solo album. Simon and Warren, meanwhile, spent several days in the Netherlands and Belgium, making record shop and TV appearances, playing acoustically to promote *Thank You*.



Warren Cuccurullo hired London's Nomis Studio in July 1995 for the band to rehearse before he, John and drummer Steve Alexander booked themselves into Metropolis Studios to record 14 tracks in a week, including *Butt Naked* with John on vocals. At this point Simon was on holiday in Jamaica with his family. He found the downturn of Duran's fortunes for a second time hard to take, and his lyrics for the recordings and the subsequent vocals were not forthcoming until 1996. The Metropolis tracks eventually became part of

POP_UP *Rolling Stone*'s review of *Thank You* was damning: "Some of the ideas are stunningly wrongheaded, like the easy-listening *Watching The Detectives* or Les Zeppelin's *Thank You*, which sounds like a cover of Chris De Burgh."

1997's *Medazzaland* album and included *Midnight Sun*, *Big Bang Generation*, *Medazzaland*, *So Long Suicide* and *Out Of My Mind*.

After the 1995 recording sessions John returned home to Laurel Canyon and began playing informal gigs at The Viper Room, the Los Angeles celebrity hangout owned by Johnny Depp. Calling on Steve Jones and Guns N'Roses' Matt Sorum and Duff McKagan, he organised a show to raise money for a friend who was suffering from cancer. The gig went well, and the quartet – calling themselves Neurotic Outsiders – soon turned the one-off show into a regular weekly event. The band also played in New York, Boston and Hollywood and were offered a record deal by Madonna's Maverick Records label. They recorded one eponymous album in 1996, produced by Talking Heads' Jerry Harrison.

John Taylor, it seemed, enjoyed the easy-going atmosphere of making music with a bunch of mates rather than being hemmed in by the managers, publicists, record labels, agents and promoters that surrounded Duran Duran. On 19 January 1997, he announced that he was leaving the band, breaking the news to a shocked crowd midway through an acoustic performance at a Duran convention in Los Angeles. "A lot of people were really upset," Taylor's publicist Anne Leighton told MTV, explaining that the bass player wanted to pursue solo and side projects, along with his B-5 record label. Leighton stressed that there was no animosity between Taylor and the remaining members.

"John's departure, though, was overwhelming; I don't think I ever thought that moment would come," Nick Rhodes later admitted to journalist Katy Krassner. "While I didn't want it to happen, I understood his need to focus on his personal life. I had to let go."

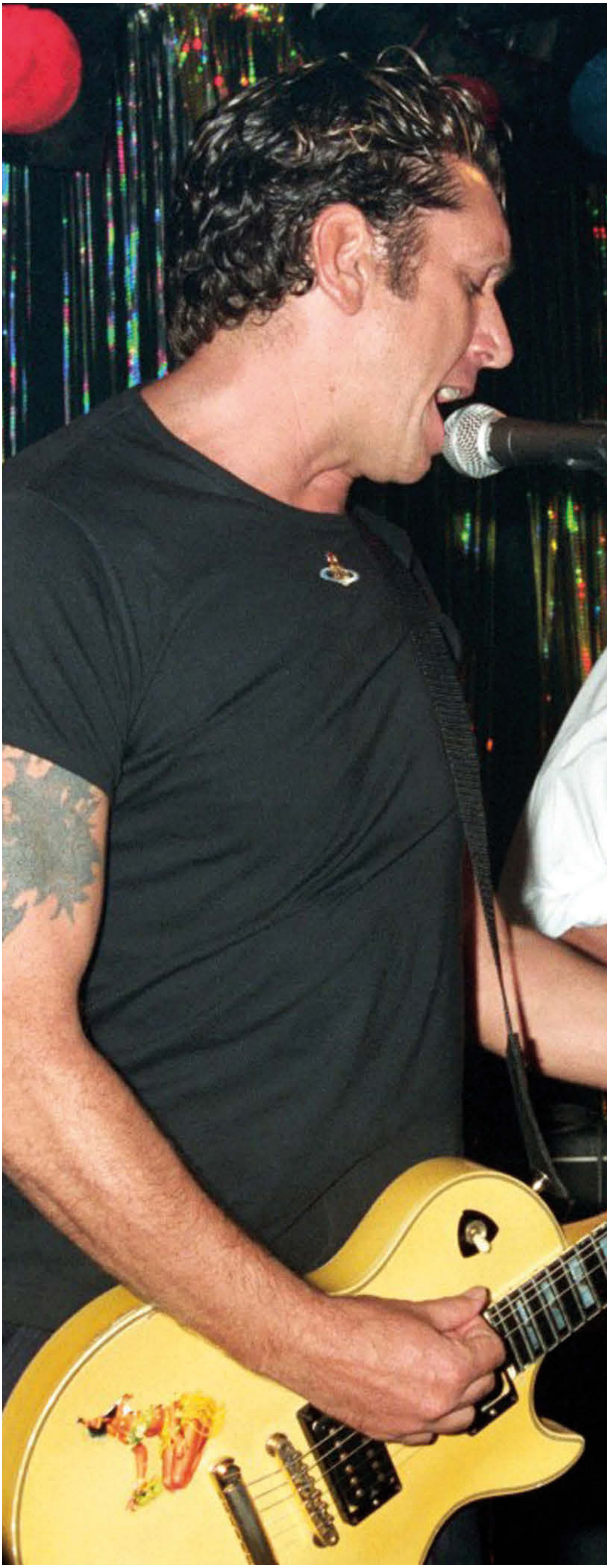
MISSING A VITAL COMPONENT

Duran Duran had successfully weathered Roger and Andy Taylor's departures, but neither musician had John's fervent following. The question in every Duran fan's mind was, could the band have a long-term future with only two original members? It soon became obvious that the real answer was "no".

Duran were no longer on EMI Capitol, but the label owned the band's back catalogue and at the end of 1998 issued the *Greatest* compilation. It went platinum in the UK and sold over a million in the US. *Electric Barbarella,* from the unreleased-in-the-UK *Medazzaland,* was issued as a single. The track, which got to No.23 in the UK charts in November 1998, beating the US Billboard No.52 placing a year previously, is credited for being the first song that could be downloaded and purchased online.

The reunion of the original Duran Duran was set in motion in 1998. Andy Taylor and Simon Le Bon had put their differences behind them and the guitarist stayed for a couple of days with the singer in London, where the conversation turned to getting the original quintet back together.

In his autobiography *Wild Boy*, Andy Taylor writes: "Duran Duran's back catalogue was doing well and we'd had one or two early approaches to see if we wanted to do something for the turn of the millennium in 2000. [I asked Simon] 'Shall we do some millennium deal, then?' 'No, because everyone is going to be doing shows around that time.' 'OK, good,' I thought. The millennium stuff is going to be well overdone and for sure very manufactured.



> JOHN'S DEPARTURE WAS OVERWHELMING. I NEVER THOUGHT THE MOMENT WOULD COME. I HAD TO LET GO.
>
> NICK RHODES

Ex-Sex Pistol Steve Jones on guitar alongside John Taylor as the Neurotic Outsiders play at Hollywood's infamous Viper Room

© Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic, Inc

POP_UP The Neurotic Outsiders was an enjoyable project for all. "It was good band," stressed ex-Pistol Steve Jones. "I didn't feel like the frontman – we took turns singing. It was fun. It wasn't a lot of pressure."

THE KEY RECORDINGS

THE NINETIES WOULD BRING DISASTROUS REVIEWS, PLUS GLIMMERS OF GREATNESS

LIBERTY

1990

Duran's first album of the Nineties was produced between October 1989 and March 1990 by Chris Kimsey. Speaking to Katy Krassner, Simon Le Bon admits that Duran didn't quite get *Liberty* right: "There are some things I wasn't crazy about, like *First Impression,* which wasn't from my heart. I didn't love *All Along The Water,* either. I think the issue with *Liberty* is that we were in a transition and there were some tracks that didn't have our whole heart in it." John Taylor later confessed to heavy recreational drug use during the recording, telling *Goldmine* magazine: "I can just remember smoking hash oil. That's all I can remember about making that album."

DURAN DURAN (AKA THE WEDDING ALBUM)

1993

"After *Liberty*, we went from being a five-piece to a four-piece again which meant using a lot of drum machines," relates Nick Rhodes on Duran's website. "We had to concentrate all of our efforts on the songwriting. We also realised how much music had changed. We very much went back to basics." Adds John Taylor: "*The Wedding Album* is one of the most important Duran [releases], from my perspective. It was the album that gave us two massive hits, outside of the Eighties! I have to credit Warren for getting this album on track and keeping it there. From beginning to end, Warren kept a watchful eye over all the recordings."

THANK YOU

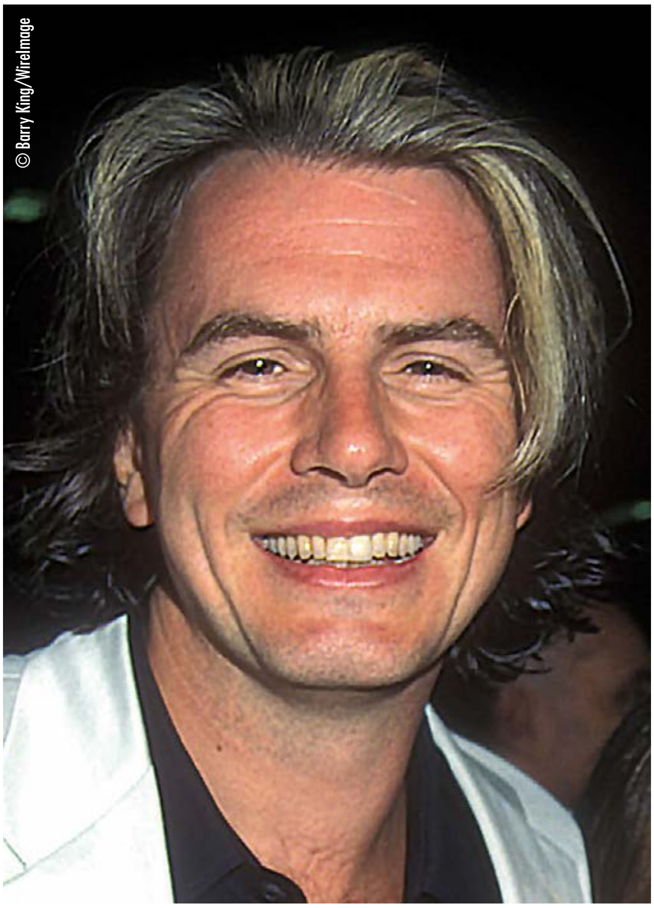
1995

Throughout their career Duran have shown themselves more than capable of following a major high with a crashing low. *Thank You* was recorded at different locations (including Prince's Paisley Park) between 1992-94 while the band were on tour, and was subject to an avalanche of damning reviews. Proving that fans have long memories, the LP was voted No.1 in *Q*'s 2006 poll of The 50 Worst Albums Ever, yet many of the original artists genuinely appreciated Duran's versions. Bob Dylan reckoned that their *Lay Lady Lay* was "the best yet. It beats mine by a country mile", while Lou Reed considered the outfit's version of *Perfect Day* to be "the best cover ever completed of one of my songs".

MEDAZZALAND

1997

With a title inspired by a drug Simon encountered during a visit to the dentist, *Medazzaland* is the rarest official Duran album, never physically released in the UK. John Taylor left during recording and only appears on four tracks. Nick Rhodes explained to Katy Krassner: "I like the album. I wrote a lot of the lyrics, because Simon had writer's block. Both *Pop Trash* and *Medazzaland* were more experimental. There are some great songs. It holds up and I like the sound. It's definitely different than earlier albums." Capitol EMI were less enthusiastic about *Medazzaland* than the band and the album was, at least in part, responsible for Duran and their long-time label severing ties.



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John in 1999 at the Beverly Hills premiere of *Sugar Town.* The Allison Anders/Kurt Voss movie was the story of an ageing supergroup and starred Rosanna Arquette. It also featured John, Martin Kemp from Spandau Ballet and Michael Des Barres.

I'd had a few similar conversations with Roger but nothing came of them… [John and I] had arranged to work on a new Power Station album… I'd lost touch with him but by the time the talk of a reunion came around he was leading a completely sober lifestyle."

MISSING THAT CREATIVE SPARK

By 1999, the Duran trio of Rhodes, Le Bon and Cuccurullo had moved away from the electronic *Medazzaland* to embrace a more organic direction for what would be issued in 2000 as the *Pop Trash* album. The record was produced by Ken Scott, who had worked on *Thank You,* but it found Duran in less than good spirits, as Scott explained to Steve Malins for his Duran biography *Wild Boys*: "Simon would always enter the studio with a swagger because there would be girls there, but I could see he was feeling dejected. He was trying to put on a brave face."

Le Bon wasn't enjoying the Duran Duran experience anymore. Being one of pop's most famous faces allowed him to spend increasing amounts of time and energy socially out and about, rather than in the studio with Rhodes and Cuccurullo working on *Pop Trash*. The band were financing the album themselves with a view to shopping the finished article around the record labels, but Le Bon's frequent absenteeism was causing problems, as Scott explained: "Two months before I arrived for work I'd been given tapes and was told Simon was adding lyrics to the music. Of course, when I got there… still no lyrics."

Speaking to Malins, Cuccurullo continued: "Simon came in: we set a schedule. First week, Simon would be there for three days; second week he would be in one day and by the third he wouldn't be there at all. Meanwhile, you've hired a producer or an engineer and work has to be done whether he's around or

Nick, Simon and Warren onstage at London's Earls Court on 8 December 1999, the last gig of the Let It Flow tour
© Tabatha Fireman/Redferns

Simon pictured attending a fashion show in Paris, 1998
© Patrick Robert/Sygma/CORBIS/Sygma via Getty Images

not. At times he wasn't involved in the music at all, and we really missed his input." Added Ken Scott: "Everyone turned up at the studio expecting Simon to finish the lead vocal, and we waited for hours. Finally, someone called to say that he'd flown out to Naomi Campbell's birthday party in Ibiza..."

Le Bon's relationship with Cuccurullo had deteriorated, whereas Rhodes had bonded with the guitarist. Now the pair were musically dominating the three-piece Duran. Previously the foremost lyricist, Le Bon seemed to have lost interest with *Pop Trash*, and for the first time on a Duran album most of the words were written by Nick Rhodes. One telling incident: for the video of *Perfect Day*, Le Bon had a gold suit made of upholstery plastic which was reminiscent of the Elvis outfit from the sleeve of the *Gold Records Volume 2* album. Because of the stiffness of the material the suit almost seemed to have a life of its own, and while wearing it Le Bon told the band he was "hallucinating Elvis". Recognising a good title for a song, Simon mentally filed the idea away. By the time he returned to the studio a week later, Warren and Nick had come up with their own *Hallucinating Elvis* song without him.

Going from being a member of one of the world's biggest bands to anonymously fiddling around making demos without the security of a record company or management (the deals with both Capitol and Left Bank had run out) also didn't help Le Bon's mood. Major record companies weren't falling over themselves to sign the band, but a deal with the Disney music label Hollywood was negotiated in June 1999 and a three-album contract signed on 25 August.

Nick Rhodes now accepts that it would have been better to put *Pop Trash* on hold to allow Le Bon time to pull himself together. The singer had been badly affected by the death of his friend Michael Hutchence, missed John Taylor's presence in the band, and was being accused in the tabloid press of having marital difficulties – which he denied.

Hollywood Records wanted changes before releasing *Pop Trash* as their debut Duran release. Ken Scott relates that the predominant change was the addition of strings: "*Pop Trash* had this really organic approach, which was radically different for Duran Duran. It was very rock'n'roll, I suppose. A mix of the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, Nineties. And they lost that. I don't know what went on. Nick seemed happy with the original mixes – then I got a call that they wanted to do these strings for the album. It was a question of acceptance. I went along with it."

Warren Cuccurullo was similarly puzzled by the change: "They got in this guy who was very hot at the time. Before you knew it, we had a very different album to the one we recorded with Ken Scott."

1999 drew to a close with most of the original members of Duran playing shows. John Taylor had formed the band Terroristen and toured the East and West coasts of the US. Included in the itinerary was a November launch party in a New York bar for Juicy Couture, John's wife Gela's clothing label; Simon Le Bon was part of the invited audience and got up and performed with Taylor and his band.

Andy Taylor played an informal set of gigs from 12-16 September with guitarist Luke Morley from the rock band Thunder, while Duran Duran themselves bid farewell to the Nineties by performing at a private party on New Year's Eve in Atlanta, Georgia, alongside Joe Cocker, with ice sculptures and fountains of Dom Perignon. The rumoured budget was half a million pounds and Duran played in a large tent for a fee, which – Warren later remarked – was the most he'd ever made in 50 minutes.

None of Duran Duran were exiting the Nineties on a high note, but the next decade would bring what every fan wanted: the return of the Fab Five...

POP_UP John Taylor's five-piece Terroristen project toured through '97 and '98 and released a well-received eponymous EP, but after 9/11 the bassist said he could never use the name again.

CLASSIC ALBUM

DURAN DURAN (THE WEDDING ALBUM)

DURAN DURAN RESPONDED TO THE NEW DECADE BY ESCHEWING THEIR OLD EXTRAVAGANCE, GOING BACK TO THEIR ROOTS AND INJECTING A HEAVY DOSE OF INTROSPECTION TO CREATE AN EXTRAORDINARY RETURN TO FORM…

MARK LINDORES

To say that Duran Duran were at a crossroads in 1991 as they readied their seventh studio album is no understatement. The new decade had seen the advent of genres like rave, rap and grunge – none of which were an obvious fit for Duran Duran, or "Done Done" as some crueller sections of the media had taken to calling them. 1990's *Liberty* spent one week in the Top 10 before falling out of the charts; the single *Violence Of Summer* only scraped the Top 20 while *Serious* missed the Top 40 altogether.

"After *Liberty*, we decided we weren't sure we had gotten the direction right," recalls Nick Rhodes. "A funny thing happens when a decade changes. In reality, not much happens on that day, but people think, 'Right, now things have changed'. Somehow at the end of the Eighties, music changed considerably. We had grunge, techno and rave culture, which left us in a place where we felt we had to make ourselves relevant to the times. We weren't about to make a grunge or techno album, but we had our songwriting. We very much went back to basics. We went to the studio and wrote and wrote."

The sessions for the album were centred at Privacy – Warren Cuccurullo's home studio in Battersea, a far cry from the lavish locations in far-flung climes in which previous albums had been recorded. However, the fact they were in a home studio allowed them the freedom to experiment without the constraints of deadlines or the expense of studio time. Lacking a definite direction, the only brief for the record was that songcraft was paramount, and songs had to be able to hold up to simply being performed by four guys in a room (the departure of drummer Sterling Campbell had left them as a four-piece again), unreliant on studio trickery or whatever happened to be in vogue.

Rather than missing the extravagances of earlier records, the band found themselves liberated by the back-to-basics, no-frills approach to working and used the process to signal a rebirth for Duran Duran. As sessions progressed, they explored a variety of different approaches, including the dance, funk-based sounds that had informed their later albums, before achieving a breakthrough with *Ordinary World* – a beautifully melancholic marriage of Warren Cuccurullo's mesmerising guitar riff and a wistful lyric from Simon Le Bon about the death of his best friend, David Miles.

"Earlier in our career Simon's lyrics had been quite oblique… you weren't quite sure what they meant – and that's what made them so interesting," John said. "But at this point, we kind of felt like we should start writing songs about emotions and see how that worked out."

The band were cautiously confident that *Ordinary World* was going to be important for them, and they were right – it provided the impetus for the rest of the

THE PLAYERS

RELEASED 11 February 1993
LABEL Capitol (US) Parlophone/EMI (UK)
PRODUCED BY Duran Duran, John Jones
ENGINEER John Jones
RECORDED AT Privacy Studio, London
PERSONNEL
Simon Le Bon – lead vocals; Warren Cuccurullo – acoustic and electric guitars; Nick Rhodes – keyboards; John Taylor – bass guitar; John Jones – co-producer, engineer, programming, keyboards, guitar, vocals, drums; Milton Nascimento – vocals on track 7 (*Breath After Breath*); Steve Ferrone – drums/percussion; Vinnie Colaiuta – drums; Dee Long – additional keyboards; Bosco – percussion; Lamya – backing vocals; Tessa Niles – backing vocals; Karen Hendrix and Jack Merigg – vocal samples

record and lit a creative spark that saw an outpouring of music ranging from the rocky, MTV-baiting swagger of *Too Much Information* to the trippy sensuality of *Love Voodoo*, the dancefloor stomp of *Drowning Man*, the Prince-inflected *U.M.F* and the breezy bossa nova of *Breath After Breath*, a duet with Brazilian artist Milton Nascimento.

Feeling that this was a make-or-break album, the boys worked tirelessly throughout 1991, often writing and recording round the clock (one working title had been *Four On The Floor* due to them crashing on the studio floor after sessions petered out in the early hours). Satisfied they had crafted a solid body of work, they decided to self-title the album, enlisting the talent of photographer Nick Egan to emphasise the rebirth of the band in artwork based on a concept of Nick's.

"I had the idea of putting our parents' wedding photos on the cover," Nick said. "The photos of these eight people, on the day they were married… that was the DNA that was to come to form us, to make that album. I wasn't sure that everyone was going to go for the idea, but everyone loved it. We gathered the photos together and when we saw them all for the first time we all thought, 'Wow – we couldn't have made this any better if we had gone looking for old photos in some archives."

Though the album and artwork was complete and delivered to the record company in the summer of 1992, the label was hesitant in releasing it, preferring to focus on what they considered to be 'priority' acts. Promo cassettes containing a different tracklisting, including future B-sides *Time For Temptation* and *Stop Dead*, were distributed to media outlets and record stores before being revoked, and the album's release postponed until the following year.

Frustrated at the delay, Duran Duran, in the midst of a creative streak, continued writing and recording throughout 1992 on a number of other projects. The sessions provided a pair of tracks which would become the final touches to the album. A cover of The Velvet Underground's 1967 classic *Femme Fatale* was the first, while the second began as a groove which Nick and Warren were working on for a project with Bush's Gavin Rossdale; snatched back by Simon, it was rewritten as *Come Undone*, a sublimely seductive love letter to his wife Yasmin, and was included as a last-minute addition to the record (so last-minute that John didn't have time to return from LA where he was awaiting the impending birth of his daughter to play on it).

Released in January 1993 – it was released a month earlier in the US after it being 'leaked' to radio – *Ordinary World* became the band's biggest hit in eight years, reaching the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic. The album followed a month later. Providing the foundation for a major career revival for Duran Duran, it saw seven of its tracks released as singles in various territories, became the basis for a mammoth world tour and won the group an invitation to appear alongside luminaries like R.E.M., Eric Clapton and Bruce Springsteen on the landmark series *MTV Unplugged – an* affirmation of their rightful place among the greats.

"I just remember thinking 'Thank God!' and being incredibly relieved," John Taylor later sighed. "For so long we had been faced with 'Eighties band! Eighties band! They're done! They're done!' And the success took the pressure off us and allowed us to get a foot in the door of a new decade." ■

TRACKLISTING

Too Much Information
Ordinary World
Love Voodoo
Drowning Man
Shotgun
Come Undone
Breath After Breath
U.M.F
None Of The Above
Femme Fatale
Shelter
To Whom It May Concern
Sin Of The City

POP ART

ALWAYS AMBITIOUS, CONTINUALLY SEEKING TO MAKE A LASTING STATEMENT, NO BAND OF THEIR ERA UNDERSTOOD THE VITAL COMMERCIAL ALCHEMY BETWEEN MUSIC AND VISUAL APPEAL BETTER THAN DURAN DURAN. NOT ONLY DID THIS LEAD TO AN UNASHAMED FASCINATION WITH THE POSSIBILITIES OF FASHION, BUT ALSO TO A FOUR-DECADE CATALOGUE OF RECORD DESIGN WORK THAT IS AS STRIKINGLY INVENTIVE AS IT IS WILDLY DIVERSE…

ANDREW DINELEY

Below: the full-colour sleeve of Duran's all-important debut single was a boldly portrait-free design that neatly blended clean, boxy Eighties sophistication with a hint of a Fifties sci-fi aesthetic

Over the last 40 years, members of Duran Duran have worked with a wide range of creative talent on the design of their record covers. They rose to fame during a period in which design was crucially important; the way a pop package was assembled could help make or break new artists. Wisely, from day one, they established a routine of trusting some of the best with their design, and have remained engaged in the creative process to this day.

PURE INTUITION

At the tail-end of the Seventies, before the line-up of the band was settled and still without a record contract, Duran Duran were regulars on the live scene, particularly around the UK's Birmingham scene. To promote these early appearances, they worked with a friend of the band, John Warwicker, on what would be their first artwork.

Warwicker, now an established graphic designer, explained: "It was during my stay in Birmingham that I met the early Duran Duran, before Simon and Andy had joined. I designed some of their early gig posters. At that point, I don't think anyone had any idea of aesthetic direction in the intellectual sense, more an intuitive reaction to design – what was right or wrong was purely a matter of personal taste.

"I would've loved to have designed those first releases, but EMI quite wisely chose Malcolm Garrett. Malcolm's design was executed perfectly for the context. His designs didn't only reflect that moment in culture, they defined it. If I had designed something then, it would have been completely wrong… but my time would come."

Garrett and his studio Assorted Images worked closely with Duran Duran from the time of their first single *Planet Earth* in 1981. Designers often seek to take inspiration from lyrics, and for the 12" version Garrett did his best to make patterns rhyme by juxtaposing single-colour stock imagery of natural terrains with a blurred image of the band.

In contrast, the 7" version, this time reproduced in full colour, was devoid of any band photography – a defiant gesture for a debut released in a period when image was everything. All the same, this first single succeeded in setting out a design template that was both confident and restrained.

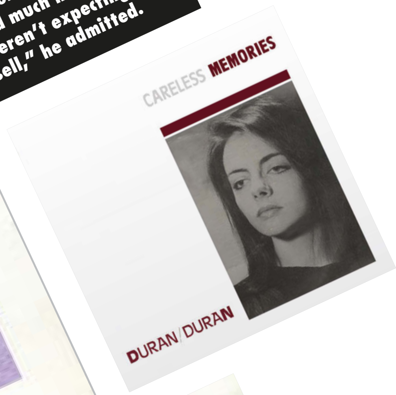
A NEW DECADE

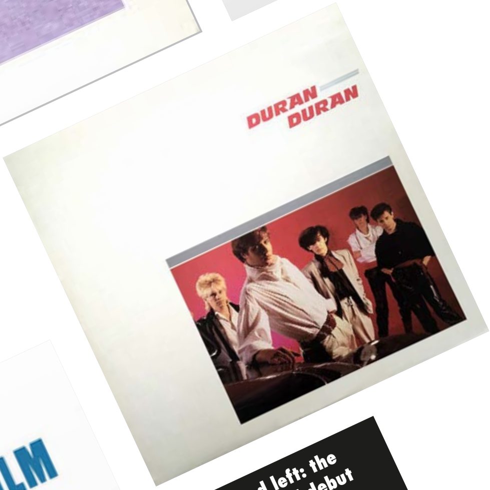
Duran Duran's sleeve aesthetic stood out from the crowd in the early Eighties. At a time when more was more and excess was celebrated, Garrett's sleeve designs – simple boxes and blocks of colour set against minimalist white fields – seemed tasteful and sophisticated. Coupled with a series of bold Duran Duran logos that stylistically epitomised the modernist enthusiasm of the new decade, the follow-up singles *Careless Memories* and *Girls On Film* followed similar form, as did the self-titled album, albeit with some decadent debossing and metallic ink effects.

For the cover of the UK single *My Own Way*, a style was introduced that contrasted remarkably with what had been before – and what would follow – for Duran Duran.

Where there had once been white, there was now black; where there had been precise boxes we now saw roughly-rendered shapes, and all

Left: Malcolm Garrett's economical single-colour triptych adorned the sleeve of the Night Version of *Planet Earth*. "I don't think they had much money. They weren't expecting it to sell," he admitted.





"At that point I don't think anyone [in the band] had any idea of aesthetic direction in the intellectual sense, more an instinctive reaction to design – what was right or wrong was purely a matter of personal taste." **JOHN WARWICKER**

Above and left: the panel-themed debut album and *Girls On Film*, with an italicised upper-case Duran Duran logo that seemed to epitomise both positivity and forward momentum

Top: the UK 7" of *My Own Way* took an odd left turn into far more muted territory, while the Japanese release (above) gave a unlicensed peek at what was to come with the *Rio* album

The slick, aspirational, era-defining *Rio* sleeve reproduced an acrylic-on-canvas painting by Patrick Nagel. Tragically, the artist had an undiagnosed heart condition and passed away in 1984

Above: Malcolm Garrett's design for 1984's *The Reflex* single displayed a transition away from pin-sharp graphic treatments to a subtly rougher-edged, more naturalistic look

"Rio was always special to me. I do recall that I mostly spent the next two years, after the record was released, trying to locate and procure a girlfriend who looked like the one in Nagel's picture on the cover." **SIMON LE BON**

MIXED RECEPTION

NICK RHODES' PHOTO BOOK WAS BOTH STRIKING AND COLOURFUL, BUT THE CRITICS TUNED OUT

In 1984, Nick Rhodes extended his artistic credentials by releasing his own book of abstract photography, backed up with an art exhibition at Hamiltons Gallery in London. The book and exhibition were aptly entitled *Interference*, as all the images – taken on a Polaroid SX-70 camera – were close-up shots of distorted TV screens taken while on tour around the world. In that same year, he provided some insight into the development of the project for *Blitz* magazine: "The book is something that is very close to me, and has been for a year-and-a-half now, since I finished all the Polaroids. Since then we've been on tour and in the studio, and at the same time I've been arguing with a great many publishers."

The book was well-received by fans of the band but there were some accusations of self-indulgence and pretension, perhaps not helped by the book's introduction, from which this passage is extracted: "A monologue between you and I: We must think about the relativity of photographs in a visual environment. We should talk about environment. We should talk about a piece of plastic three-and-a-half inches by four inches – that piece of plastic could be thought of as either microscopic or as being over the size of oceans."

Above: the *Seven...* sleeve shot was taken by Belgian-born photographer Rebecca Blake. John Taylor would employ her services for his debut solo single *I Do What I Do* in 1986

colour photography had now been replaced with linocuts using a restrained colour palette. Even the new band logo displayed no visual connection with their past. The sleeve's bullfighting illustration was again inspired by lyrics from the song itself – "Now you're on the sand lane everyday/ Dancing with the bulls in any old way…"

Interestingly, for this design, Garrett collaborated with an old friend, Peter Saville, but the end result had little in common with anything either of them had previously produced. Saville, a respected record sleeve designer in his own right, had a connection with Garrett that went back a decade further to their shared student days at St Ambrose College in Greater Manchester. *My Own Way* would act as curious bridge between Duran Duran's first two albums, and provided no musical or visual clues about what would follow next.

Left: Hungry Like The Wolf was presented with a clever partial preview of the Rio cover. Below: Save A Prayer's Sri Lankan video still echoed the yearning of Simon Le Bon's lyric

PURE GLAMOUR

A week in advance of their sophomore album, *Rio*, Duran Duran released the single *Hungry Like The Wolf*. Its colourful, angular sleeve design offered a tantalising glimpse of the album to come. Garrett opted to 'letterbox' Patrick Nagel's iconic illustration of Rio herself, the ice cream smile hidden away and reserved until the full reveal of the album's cover. Nagel's illustration was at the centre of Garrett's wraparound album sleeve design, and the graphics complemented it perfectly. Nagel was an internationally renowned artist with work in galleries and publications worldwide. His portraits, predominantly of beautiful women, whilst at first appearing simple, were actually the result of working with photography: he would gradually remove the details, leaving behind only what was required to present a flat yet glamorous illustration.

Duran Duran were fans of his work, as cited by Matthew Chojnacki in his book *Put The Needle On The Record*. "We had seen Nagel's illustrations in *Playboy* magazine, and approached him off the back of that," John Taylor recalled. "He did two designs for us and we chose the one [on the *Rio* cover]. Then the other one appeared out of the blue on the Japanese single release of *My Own Way*. No one had told the Japanese label that we hadn't actually bought that one."

For the cover of the follow-up single, August 1982's *Save A Prayer*, Garrett compositionally mirrored the album's cover layout using a still from the Sri Lankan video shoot that bled off and wrapped around the sleeve. A slender crucifix was also incorporated into the design to reference the song's title.

Below: the 'Simon' version of The Wild Boys came especially close to dallying with NWOBHM imagery. The full set made for an attractive collection, which couldn't have harmed record sales.

CHASING THE TIGER

Duran Duran's intriguing-titled third album was released as 1983 was drawing to a close. For the sleeve design Garrett teamed up with another old friend from his college days at St Ambrose, splitting design duties with Keith Breeden (then working with him at Assorted Images before going on to establish DKB, his own highly-successful design practice).

The album cover featured a glamorous shot of the band taken by Rebecca Blake on the steps of the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. This image was set in an elaborate visual context, designed by Garrett and illustrated by Breeden. It thematically linked with the adventurous narrative seen in some of the album's supporting videos. In an interesting evolution, this new 'weathered' aesthetic was also applied to the cover of *The Reflex*, where angular graphics were texturally executed using paint and pencils, with all guidelines and rough edges left exposed.

With the band now at the peak of their fame, it was only six months before a brand new single would appear. *The Wild Boys* was released with no less than six cover options; one for each band member, and one more of the full line-up. Alas, the single stalled just one place short of the UK No.1 spot, proving that beautiful design and shrewd marketing can't guarantee a chart-topping single.

BENDING THE RULES

By the time Duran Duran arrived back after a break in 1986 with their *Notorious* album, they had effectively slimmed down to a trio. The moody cover image, captured by photographer John Swannell, was paired with a shot of supermodel Christy Turlington on the reverse. The band's new line-up and sound called for a fresh visual outlook, and this was implemented by Frank Olinsky at Manhattan Design. His involvement came about through work with John and Andy Taylor's side project The Power Station, where he'd developed graphics largely using red, black and white. Olinsky

applied this same reduced colour palette to the *Notorious* album and its singles. The typography was rendered in a style reminiscent to that used on the sleeve of *Parade* by Prince and the Revolution, released earlier that same year.

In 1988, Duran Duran released *Big Thing*. Hans Arnold, the sleeve's Swiss designer, was rather better-known as an artist and illustrator than a designer, but his use of early computer graphics certainly suited the album's brazen title. The lead single, *I Don't Want Your Love*, trailed the album's release by a month, and initially it appeared that design cues were coming from a style seen on the *Notorious*-era singles, with a predominant use of typography rendered in red, white and black. Thankfully, the follow-up singles *All She Wants Is* and *Do You Believe In Shame?* saw a return to full colour, resulting in some of Duran's most garish designs to date.

Hans Arnold's duties also extended to working on the sleeve design and layout of 1989's compilation album, *Decade*. For this, he explored pop art further, placing collaged images created by fashion designer and artist Stephen Sprouse at the centre of the work. Sprouse, a friend of Andy Warhol's, chose to render the band in true pop art fashion. Nick Rhodes is found resembling his hero Warhol on the front cover, while Le Bon is seen clutching an unavoidably phallic-looking rocket as John Taylor nonchalantly stares on. The whole image is displayed against a tin foil background – possibly another reference to Warhol, whose infamous Factory studio was decorated with the reflective material.

FINDING ENERGY

By 1990's *Liberty*, Duran Duran appeared in full pin-up mode once again across the album's sleeve. Former fashion model and renowned photographer Ellen Von Unwerth was the woman behind the images (she also shot many other iconic sleeves, including albums by Kylie, Annie Lennox and Janet Jackson).

The typography inside the album, meanwhile, was the work of lettering artist Ruth Rowland, whose hand-rendered wording can be seen throughout the CD's booklet. "I have a vivid memory of sitting at a drawing board in Icon Design's London studio, talking to Simon Le Bon about lettering," Rowland explains. "The brush lettering on the *Liberty* album is deliberately unrestrained and energetic to complement the bright, dynamic imagery. I worked much larger than it's reproduced on the sleeve to try to keep the style casual – something that's a lot more difficult than you'd imagine. Looking back at the album, I feel it perfectly captures a moment in time. I still enjoy that irreverent, raw quality and the way the words move across the sleeve."

CUT AND PASTE

Duran Duran returned with a vengeance at the start of 1993 with their seventh studio album. It would project them back into the charts with singles that remain firm favourites today and a series of bold designs. The sleeve – by Nick Egan with Eric Roinestad – featured a solitary gold Duran Duran logo over a selection of sepia-toned wedding photos of each band member's parents, a choice which gained the record its nickname of '*The Wedding Album*' to avoid eponymous confusion. Inside and across its single releases, the design was left to run rampant with an aesthetic that could be read as a DIY-style, punk-era fanzine pastiche. Like the music it packaged, the design seemed to reference a diversity of influences; Jean-Michel Basquiat with its raw illustrative sketching, Warhol again with some overlaid print effects, also seen on the single cover for *Too Much Information*.

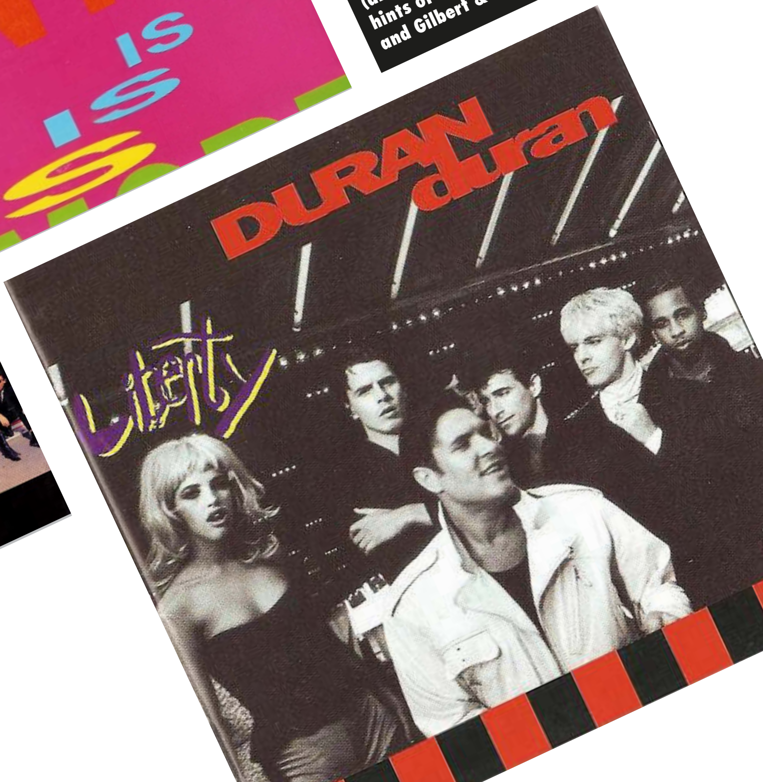
In 1997, Duran Duran released *Medazzaland* and handed over design responsibilities for the album's sleeve to Andrew Day, fresh from Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design. In some ways his style followed

Right: Big Thing and its singles, including Do You Believe In Shame? and All She Wants Is, played with jarring colours, while I Don't Want Your Love (far right) chose a crossed-out heart symbol

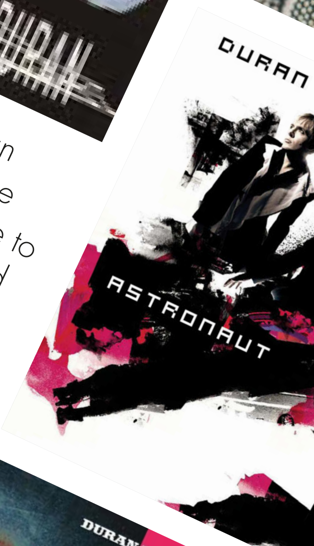
Left and below: the *Notorious* design zeroed in on Simon, Nick and John as if to underline the strength of personality of this stripped-down Duran. Christy Turlington adorned the reverse.

"The brush lettering on the *Liberty* album is unrestrained and energetic to complement the dynamic imagery. I feel it perfectly captures a moment in time." **RUTH ROWLAND**

The candid black-and-white photographic approach of *Liberty* (below) gave way to deeply stylised pop art on the cover of *Decade* (above), with heavy hints of Andy Warhol and Gilbert & George



Below: 'The Wedding Album' employed genuine family archive photos. In stark contrast, Medazzaland (right) scratched and defaced images of the band and its past with faux-urban graffiti



"Because of our history together, there's been a trust and an openness. I didn't really think of the 'reunion', partly because this was how I've always known them… it was more a desire to show them at their best and to interpret the energy that seemed to be present at the time." **JOHN WARWICKER**

EASTERN PLAYBOYS

FOR THEIR 2017 LIVE ALBUM, DURAN COMMISSIONED A NEW WORK FROM A FAVOURITE JAPANESE PAINTER

For Record Store Day 2018, Duran Duran released Budokan, a seven-track live mini-album recorded at the Budokan Hall in Tokyo, 2017. This collectible release's elaborate sleeve design features a phantasmagorical painting of Duran Duran by the acclaimed Japanese designer and artist Tadanori Yokoo as its cover focus, with graphic design by John Warwicker.

Warwicker explained: "For the insert, I had complete freedom. I took my direction from the octagonal shape of the Budokan and from Japanese designs to create my own modernised interpretation. Nick, John and I had talked about Yokoo and other designers in our first meetings that we had in Birmingham, so this approach seemed appropriate. As with Astronaut this was my first thought, my gut feeling, and fortunately it also resonated with the band. It's an approach I'd love to explore further… whether or not it would be appropriate remains to be seen."

Paper Gods (above right) chose to reverse the controversial Medazzaland design by respectfully imposing multiple telling images from the band's past on top of a painting by Alex Israel

on from the scratchy aesthetic of '*The Wedding Album'* but he controversially pushed it even further, sacrilegiously opting to desecrate the image of Rio herself on the sleeve's back cover. While it may have been a way of expressing how the band had moved on from their past, such a statement might also be judged as disrespectful of the late Patrick Nagel's art. On his website, Day informs us that *Medazzaland* was voted the worst-ever Duran Duran cover by fans. The band themselves, credited with art direction duties for this album, must have been on board with the ideas, but it remains a curious creative decision. Art direction duties would continue to be shared with Andrew Day on the follow-up album in 2000, *Pop Trash*. For this, Day used a cropped close-up of a photo he had taken during a visit to the Liberace museum in Las Vegas. "Diamante set the tone as medium of choice for the rest of the album design," he adds.

All that glitters: the *Pop Trash* cover (left) employed Andrew Day's snap of Liberace's Rhinestone Roadster, a vehicle that adorned the entertainer's shows in the mid-Eighties

NEW WORLDS

In 2004 Duran Duran returned to their 'famous five' line-up once again. With all original members back on board, *Astronaut* promised a lot. For the cover of the album and its hit single, *(Reach Up For The) Sunrise,* they went back to their roots, and John Warwicker finally got to create sleeve artwork for his old friends. There is a beautiful painterly quality to *Astronaut*'s cover art; it's an impressionistic assemblage of the band, married with a new logo rendered in a suitably futuristic typeface, germane to the album's title. Warwicker explains about how the ideas came together: "With some designs there are discussions about references to be made visible. At other times a design, as in the case of *Astronaut,* is generated by the feeling towards a situation and a response to something: in this case it was Kristian Schuller's photographs.

"Because of our history together, there's been a trust and an openness. I really didn't think of the 'reunion' so much, partly because this was how I've always known them… it was more a desire to show them at their best and to interpret the energy that seemed to be present at the time.

"Nick is always involved in the design, as is John Taylor. They had already chosen the photographer, so I art-directed the photo session and combined the photographs with graphics and typography."

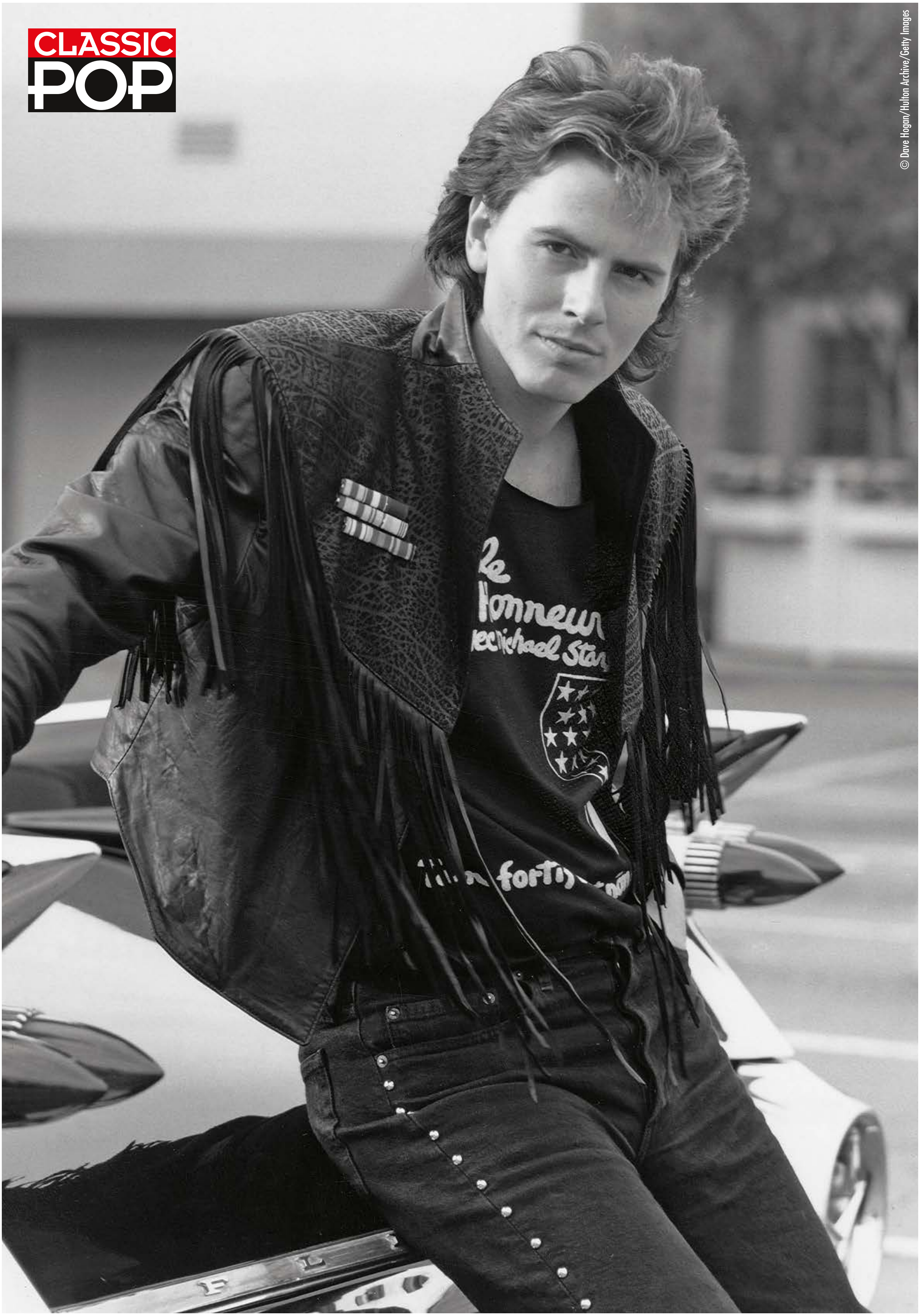
Confirming John Warwicker's word on Nick Rhodes and John Taylor's involvement with their own sleeve designs, 2007's *Red Carpet Massacre* album credits Taylor as Art Director and Rhodes as cover photographer. With the design help of Patty Palazzo and additional photography by Kristin Burns, the end result may not be among the band's best, but it does demonstrate a willingness to try something different.

As 2010 came to a close, *All You Need Is Now*, Duran Duran's 13th studio album, was partly released digitally shortly in advance of its fuller physical format. It featured the artwork of Clunie Reid with design assistance from Rory McCartney. Producer Mark Ronson famously wanted to make a follow-up to *Rio*, but the only visual hint of any such connection is perhaps the flash of cerise and a bold letter 'D' – updated, yet still reminiscent of their old logo. Ronson's undying admiration for *Rio* had been underlined earlier that year when the artwork for his own album, *Record Collection*, included an homage in the form of Ronson himself partially rendered in classic Patrick Nagel style.

BOX OF DELIGHTS

Half a decade would pass before Duran fans were presented with a new album, but 2015's *Paper Gods* duly arrived in immaculate packaging. The original plan was to ask a number of different artists to generate sleeve designs that could potentially form an art exhibition in its own right, but this proved too ambitious, so just one artist was commissioned.

Nick Rhodes was a fan of Alex Israel's modern pop art, and it was Israel that came up with the idea to use iconic images from the past – much like Warhol had done in his time. These images were then rendered as faux-stickers and placed against one of Israel's signature 'sky' paintings. The final design became a work of art in itself in the form of a vinyl boxset in an edition of just 350; inside, amongst the vinyl, a signed certificate of authenticity and a number of reflective art prints, was a set of 16 stickers that one could affix to the outer case to create a unique version of the sleeve. It's doubtful that many did risk this manoeuvre, and this remains a highly coveted item in the Duran Duran canon of collectibles.



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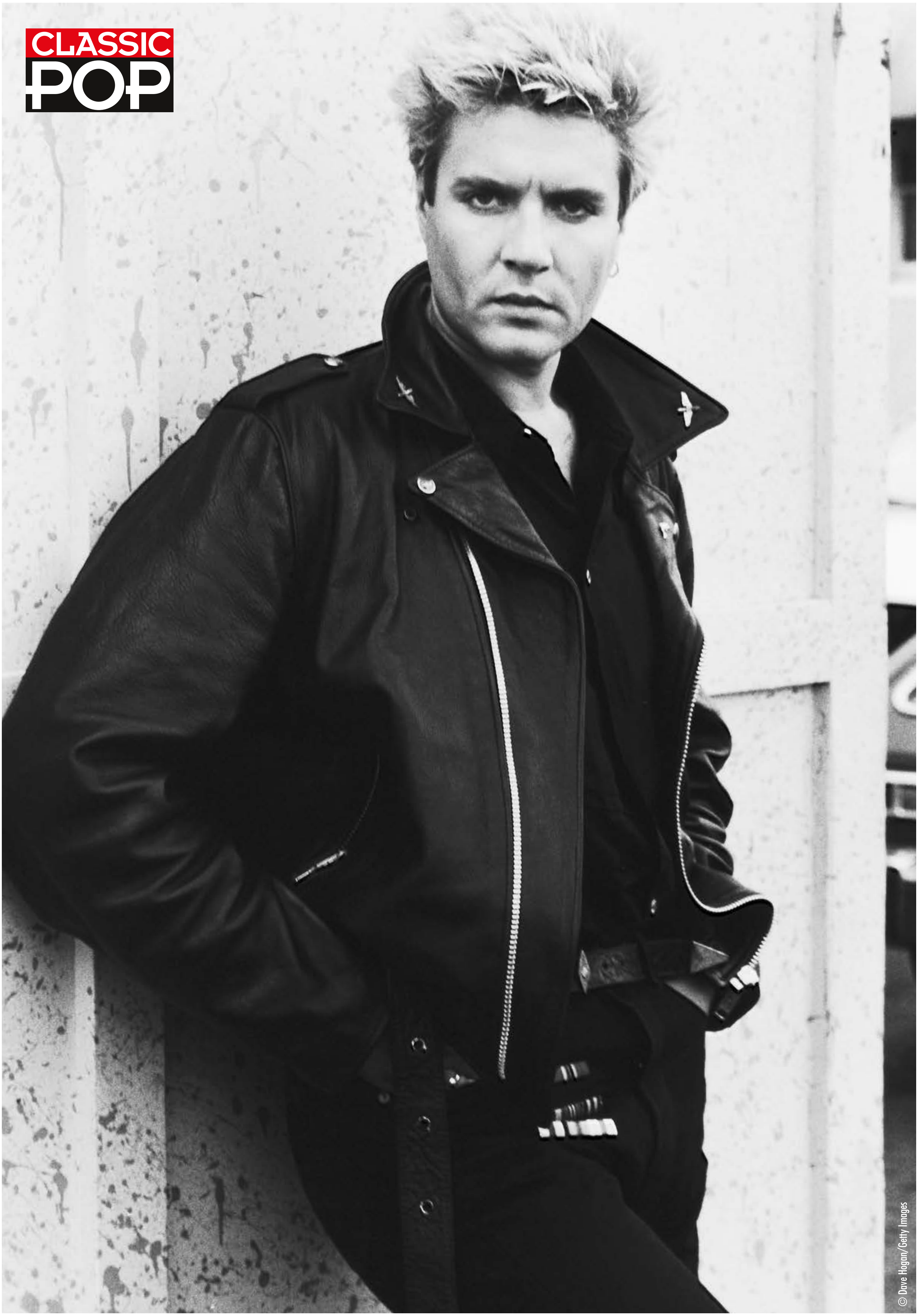
CLASSIC POP



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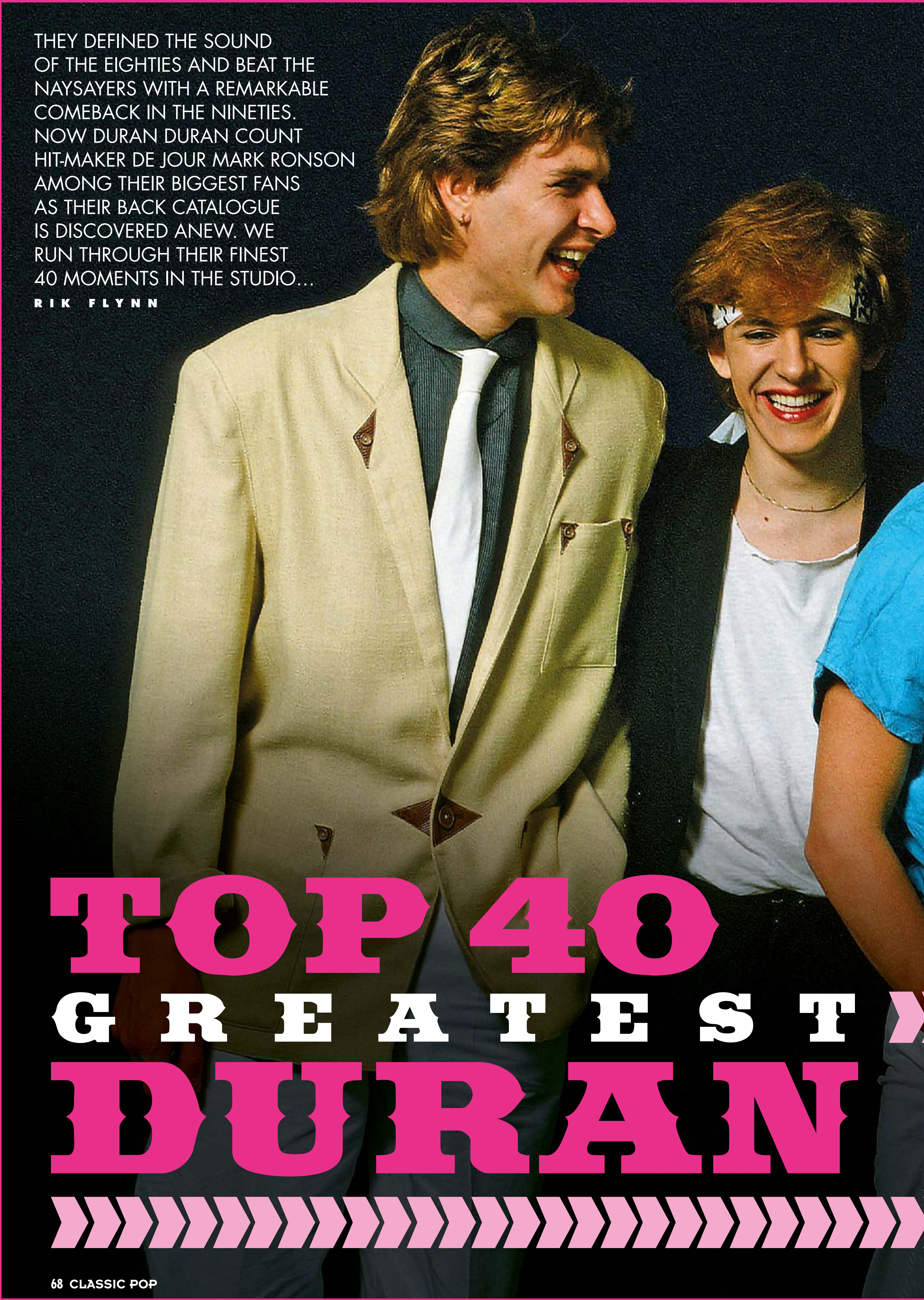
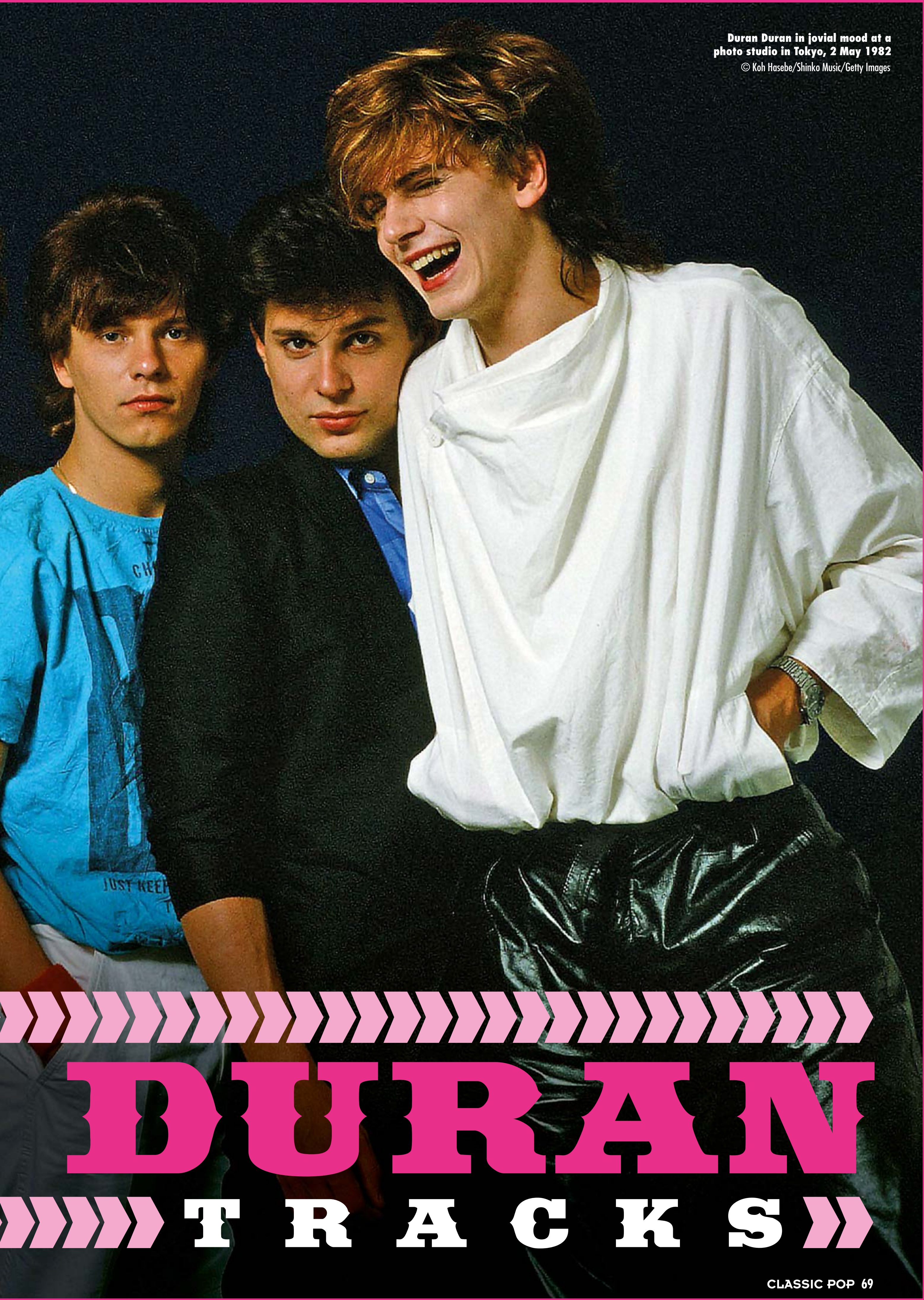


THEY DEFINED THE SOUND OF THE EIGHTIES AND BEAT THE NAYSAYERS WITH A REMARKABLE COMEBACK IN THE NINETIES. NOW DURAN DURAN COUNT HIT-MAKER DE JOUR MARK RONSON AMONG THEIR BIGGEST FANS AS THEIR BACK CATALOGUE IS DISCOVERED ANEW. WE RUN THROUGH THEIR FINEST 40 MOMENTS IN THE STUDIO…

RIK FLYNN

TOP 40 GREATEST DURAN



Duran Duran in jovial mood at a photo studio in Tokyo, 2 May 1982

© Koh Hasebe/Shinko Music/Getty Images

DURAN TRACKS

In all honesty, this is a list that almost writes itself. Duran Duran are, after all, amongst the finest singles bands of their day. From within the grooves of 14 studio albums, containing just short of 40 for the most part magnificent singles, there's a wide array of nailed-down perennials at our disposal. And while most commentators would suggest the band's early period – at the vanguard of both New Wave sounds and New Romantic style – as the outright pinnacle, we'd propose that there's a range of lofty musical peaks dotted throughout their later career (and one later single, in particular, that outdoes them all).

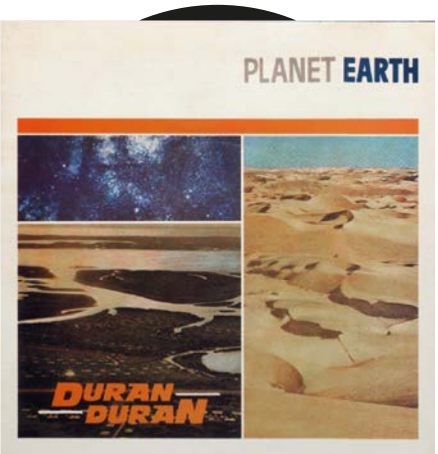
From shining pop classics that are impossible to ignore to moonlit treasures that are far subtler in their persuasion, there's plenty here for most tastes. Beyond the album hits, there's a singular chart-topping satellite single, album tracks revamped with cutting-edge producers (and then put through the Duran mould) and a few B-sides that were plainly as good as any of those carefully-selected album choices.

We've chosen to disallow both covers (skilfully circumnavigating the much-maligned *Thank You* LP) and side-projects to avoid any squabbling, and there's a lengthy list of cuts that were reluctantly consigned to the 'bubbling under' category. Those that almost made the grade but deserve an honorary mention include luscious B-sides *Faith In Colour* and *Like An Angel*; the subtler end of Duran balladry in *Too Late Marlene (Big Thing)*, *Starting To Remember* (*Pop Trash*) and *Point Of No Return* (*Astronaut*); as well as pop highpoints *I Take The Dice* (*Seven And The Ragged Tiger*) and *Too Much Information* (the *'Wedding Album'*). A few moments from *Rio* are also absent (well, we couldn't include them all), and newer fare such as *Face For Today* and *Paper Gods* also just missed the boat.

Nonetheless, this chronological list encapsulates a body of work that – despite the ever-changing line-ups – shows a band that survived and thrived thanks to that rare ability to adapt, and with unabated confidence.

At times they could do no wrong; at times the critics bayed for blood and at times fans were left scratching their heads, but storms were ridden and dog days overcome. In our mind's eye, a reunited Fab Five are, at present, toasting these past 40 years on the deck of a luxury yacht moored in some far-flung paradise (awaiting their copy of *Classic Pop*). Fantasy it may be, and while those days of rude excess are all but consigned to history, it's our vision, and we're holding on to it.

Stubborn, ostentatious, experimental and above all very, very talented, Duran Duran will no doubt surprise us once more when the next project comes around.



01

PLANET EARTH
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

This sci-fi-loving debut announced a band transmitting miles away from Terra Firma. Commandeering a headline (about Spandau Ballet) entitled "Here Come The New Romantics", *Planet Earth* installed the five-piece as white-hot poster boys for the movement. After EMI won the bidding war, Birmingham's high hopes went direct from tourbus to studio. Colin Thurston came in to man the controls off the back of successes with Bowie and The Human League, and a Blitz club classic – and a UK No.12 – was born.

02

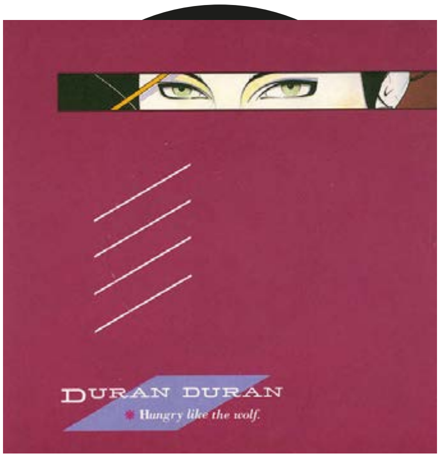
LATE BAR
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

Written about their roots as underground braves of the Brummie scene, this holds the zeal of a band feeling for their sound. The now-familiar ingredients are all in evidence: tight, pulsing funk patterns from John and Roger, Andy's manic riffing, voluminous keys from Nick, and a shadowy, goth-tinged bellow from Simon. Partitioned away from the album as the B-side to *Planet Earth, Late Bar* made for an essential 7". As EMI A&R man Dave Ambrose said: "This was going to be a very, very important band."

06

ANYONE OUT THERE
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

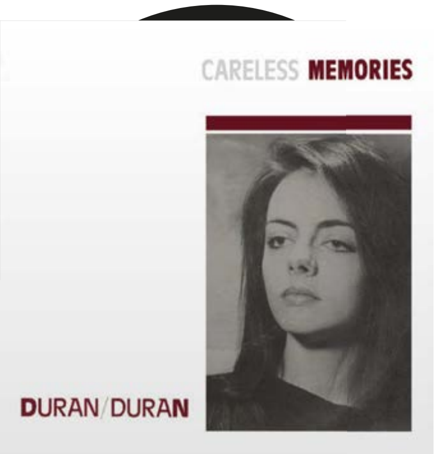
More evidence of Duran's early prowess, from a revolving buffered guitar riff to soft, swirling synths and the Bowie-aping slap bass that plays out the track. This ode to lost love and loneliness conjoining Roxy Music, Japan and Chic, was first aired at the band's inaugural Birmingham show and would appear on their debut album. Beyond the eye shadow and billowing shirts synonymous with New Romanticism lay something far more special. It made Nile Rodgers' playlist of his favourite Duran tracks.



07

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

The first US hit shows the rocky intentions of a band in the throes of a world takeover. Conceived by Le Bon and Rhodes at EMI's demo studio with the use of cutting-edge tech (supposedly while suffering hangovers), it was finished in record time – or, as John Taylor surmised, "it was probably written by cocktail hour". Simon's *Red Riding Hood*-inspired narrative traces the guitar motif, a Jupiter-8 synth orbits its popcorn arpeggio, and Simmons and Roland 808 drum machines underpin an animalistic groove.



03

CARELESS MEMORIES

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

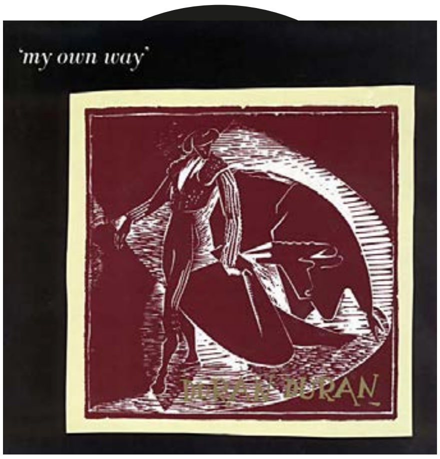
Fresh from the Rum Runner's New Year's Eve party, the band were thrust sleep-deprived into the studio to complete their LP. According to John Taylor's memoir, it was EMI big-wigs that chose this feral dispatch as *Planet Earth*'s successor. Sadly, where their debut cut through, its angsty twin faltered, and was soon forgotten outside of fan circles. While for many B-side *Khanada* was better, this menacing cult favourite borrowed the best bits from The Cure's *Boys Don't Cry* album and ran with them.

04

GIRLS ON FILM

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

It's viewed as the track that helped secure stratospheric fame, but *Girls On Film* was fashioned earlier in the band's history, and the original demo (made with ex-singer Andy Wickett) has recently surfaced. While that gritty post-punk jam displays the band's innards, the later reboot shows Le Bon in career-best form. The notorious Godley & Creme video might suggest otherwise, but behind the sexual imagery lie lyrics that call out the fashion industry for exploitation of women. An MTV staple, it made UK No.5.

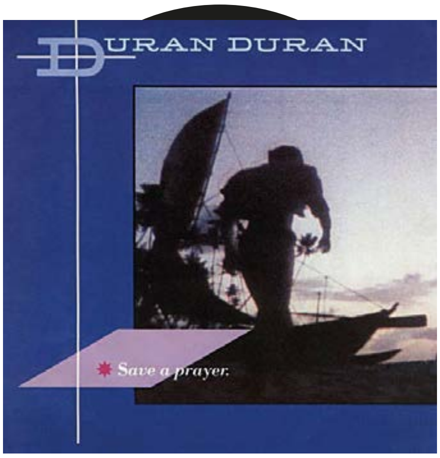


05

MY OWN WAY (ALBUM VERSION)

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1981**

A simple, brilliant coalescence from the flawless *Rio* album. This slower-paced version is the most natural; the Carnival mix adds weight to the rhythm, but why the band ramped up the tempo so much for the single remix is beyond us… and the formulaic disco strings stripped the song of any semblance of cool. The band seem to agree: it's absent from all compilations and is never performed live. Still, the incendiary Night Version (on the UK 12") goes some way to repairing the damage.



08

SAVE A PRAYER

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

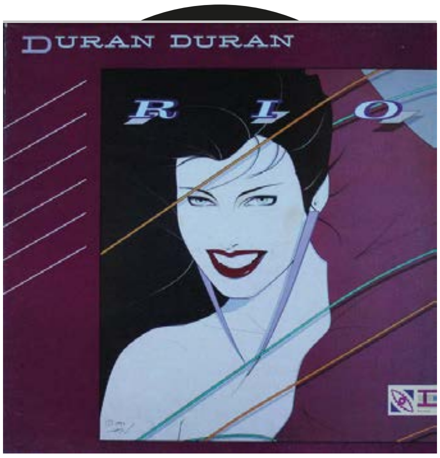
The third, most sophisticated single from *Rio* was a masterstroke of cool – and the first ballad they'd unleashed. With the fuzzy mise-en-scène of a fleeting dalliance and another MTV-friendly video, it was a surefire hit, only denied the UK summit by the imperishable *Eye Of The Tiger* (we'll forgive them that one). The song was released by Eagles Of Death Metal in memory of the victims of the Paris terrorist attack in 2015. Duran Duran donated all the royalties they gained from the cover to the campaign.

09

RIO

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

The eye-wateringly decadent yacht video somehow defined the Eighties (and the band), but none of that overblown escapism matters a jot. *Rio*'s verses were adapted from early track *See Me Repeat Me*, while the chorus took inspiration from Birmingham peers TV Eye. The end result is an effervescent clash of arpeggiated synth, rhythm-clinging guitar stabs and an intricate, wandering bassline inspired by Sly and the Family Stone. Add in Le Bon's dynamic lead and lyrics, and it's one killer calling-card.

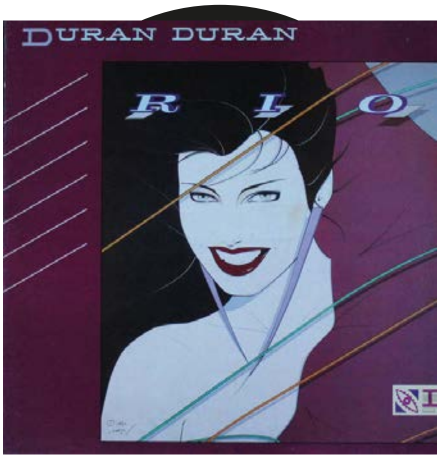


10

HOLD BACK THE RAIN

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

Rio's grandiose fifth track runs deep, and while we're sure it had Princess Di singing into her hairbrush, its tone was murkier than most. Behind it lay Simon's heartfelt plea to John; he was "staying out too late, taking too many drugs, drinking too much, going home with the wrong kinds of people," Le Bon explained to VH1. Hedonistic cul-de-sacs aside, Taylor's propellant bassline was integral to the track. In 2001, the song was played on Space Shuttle Atlantis as it prepared to land at Cape Canaveral.

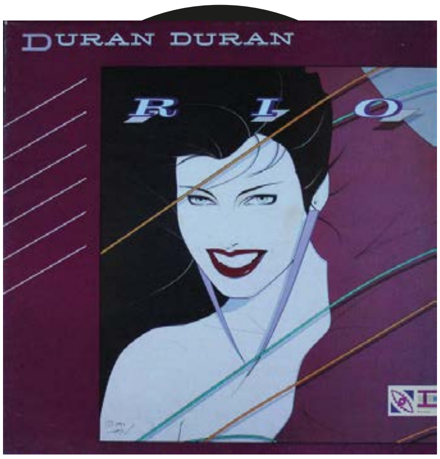


11

NEW RELIGION

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

The big singles were the pillars that made *Rio* a classic of the era, but tracks like this ghostly epic grew steadily in stature once the lustre of the main events had worn off. Funereal synths give way to a pulsing groove, enclosing John's slap-heavy bassline, while Andy's slanted hook is up there with his finest and Le Bon weaves his characters into a hypnotic altercation via rhythmic swaps from rap-like staccato to a drawn-out drawl. Seek out the 1981 Manchester Square demo for a window into the band's writing process.

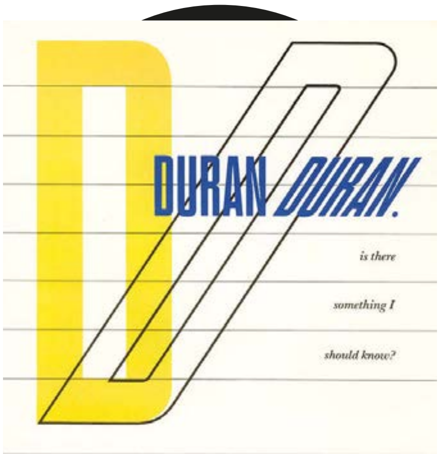


12

THE CHAUFFEUR

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1982**

Simon's 1978 poem about a driver's obsession with his passenger won him his place at his Duran audition. "It was an important stepping block," said Nick Rhodes. "It was the first completely electronic thing we'd done, and it's turned into this sort of strange cult [hit]." There have been covers by Deftones, Sneaker Pimps and LA's Warpaint, who cut it for the 2014 Duran tribute *Making Patterns Rhyme*. The song features Le Bon on ocarina, samples from an entomology documentary, and synth from John Mulligan of Fashion.

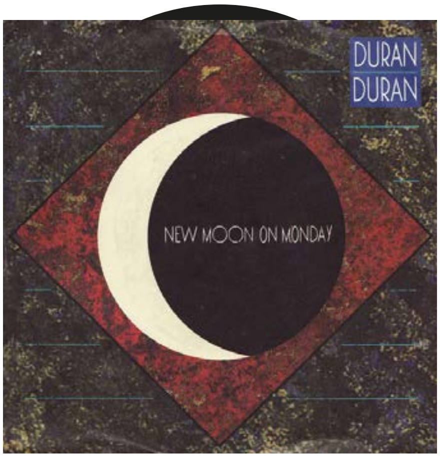


13

IS THERE SOMETHING I SHOULD KNOW?

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1983**

It took a more minimalistic approach to grab the UK top spot. Nick Rhodes had helped Kajagoogoo to No.1 with *Too Shy* from the other side of the desk, and it's likely that this was designed to equal it. With The Beatles' *Please Please Me* as a starting point, the song came to life in speedy time. "It was our fastest-selling record and probably also the quickest to write," wrote Andy Taylor. "It felt as if it only took about 10 minutes." It has since been played on Mars by the Mars Rover.



16

NEW MOON ON MONDAY

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1984**

Following its serpentine cousin into the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic, this oft-overlooked single is a top pick with devotees. Bowie's influence is clear in its *China Girl*-aping verse, but the chorus with its portrait of dancing fire and lonely satellites is most certainly Duran Duran. John Taylor called it a "much more subtle seduction" than their previous material. Do track down the filmic 17-minute 'movie version', Ian Little's Dance Mix, and our pick – Chicago producer Peter Beyer's groovesome Catbirdman version.

The Reflex blended club-bound rhythm, jagged chords, errant out-of-tune steel drum synth sounds and Raphael Dejesus' percussive genius with a narrative that even Simon Le Bon didn't understand.

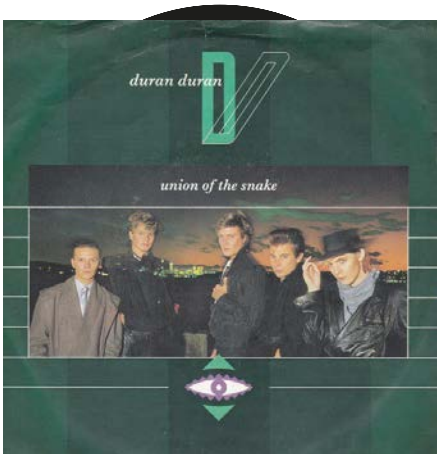
17

THE REFLEX (SINGLE VERSION)

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1984**

The Reflex blended club-bound rhythm, jagged chords, errant (slightly out-of-tune) steel drum synth sounds and Raphael Dejesus' percussive genius with a disorientating narrative that even Simon Le Bon didn't understand. The label wasn't convinced, but Nile Rodgers' pioneering revamp brought the whole thing to fruition. "It blew my barn doors off," Le Bon told *Billboard*. The single snatched the UK No.1 from Lionel Ritchie (*Hello*), and toppled Cyndi Lauper (*Time After Time*) for the US crown.

Dubbed 'the survival song', *Notorious* announced a new phase of their career. With Andy and Roger both departed, it weathered the storm and helped the three-piece to emerge triumphant.



14

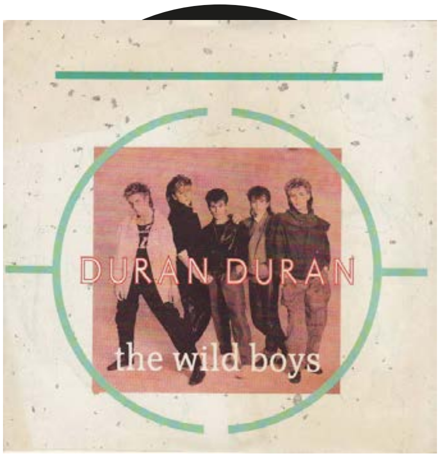
UNION OF THE SNAKE
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1983**

Sessions for *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* – an album conceived in the Côte D'Azur and cut on Montserrat – were marked by round-the-clock debauchery (including "getting blasted on Martinis" with Elton John in Cannes). This lead single emerged from the chaos thanks to Nick's state-of-the-art Fairlight synth and his toying with its "outer limits". Le Bon has been tight-lipped about the lyrics, offering only that they were inspired by Jim Morrison and tantric sex – but who cares when it has a sax solo as glorious as this?

15

SECRET OKTOBER
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1983**

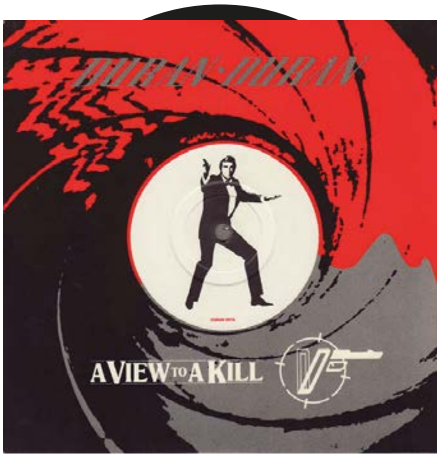
In amongst the stadium-friendly hits, this slender, atmospheric ballad creeps into the consciousness via more subtle means. Inexplicably, it never made it onto *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, becoming the flipside to *Union Of The Snake*. Imagery of fireworks, speeding trains and distant thunder combine with circuitous synth and a constant bubbling sequence, while spoken word dips in and out, like Le Bon's shadowy second self. Played over the end credits of the *Sing Blue Silver* documentary, this has become a fan favourite.



18

THE WILD BOYS
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1984**

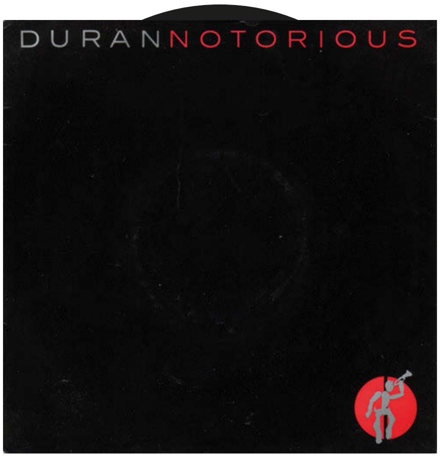
Written for Russell Mulcahy's film adaptation of William Burroughs' novel *The Wild Boys: A Book Of The Dead*, this took on a life of its own when that project fell through. Nile Rodgers was armed with a brief to concoct an "extreme drum sound", so he gathered raw audio and samples to put through his futuristic new Synclavier sampler. Thanks to Mulcahy, the band inherited a wealth of ideas to use in the ambitious video. The sole studio track on the *Arena* live album, it made No.2 on both sides of the pond.



19

A VIEW TO A KILL
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1985**

James Bond fanatic John Taylor scored the commission after a drunken encounter with producer 'Cubby' Broccoli, who installed the five-piece in the studio with composer John Barry. Personality clashes meant problems, but the showdown between Barry's traditional approach and the band's modern thinking made it work. "We wanted to give it something very contemporary and very Duran Duran," Taylor said. "We didn't really think about what we had to follow." It's the only Bond theme to ever score a US No.1.

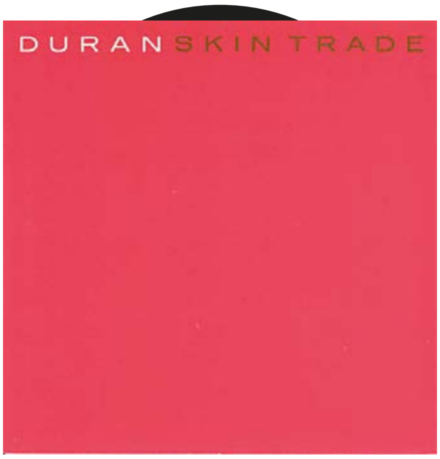


20

NOTORIOUS
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1986**

Dubbed "the survival song" by the band, *Notorious* announced a new phase of their career. With the caustic circumstances surrounding Andy's departure and a burnt-out Roger also out, things could have gone south. Instead, this stoic riposte not only weathered the storm – while supposedly poking fun at Taylor ("Who really gives a damn for a flaky bandit") – but also helped the three-piece emerge triumphant. Exposing their funkier influences with 'The Hitmaker' Nile Rodgers at the helm was a masterstroke.

> "We're surrounded by the desire for the super ordinary – super man, super life, video game explosion. I wanted to say that the ordinary world is actually the most beautiful thing."
>
> **SIMON LE BON**



21

SKIN TRADE

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1987**

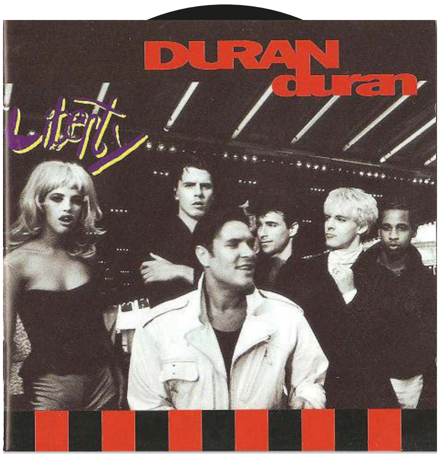
Simon, Nick and John felt this Prince-inspired funk-fest would further prove that three was as strong as five, but it fell short of their expectations. Taking its title from Dylan Thomas' unfinished book *Adventures In The Skin Trade*, the track married syncopated guitar and *Purple Rain* synths with The Borneo Horns liberally peppered throughout, while Le Bon's newfound falsetto prowled across this rhythmic plateau to understated yet potent effect. It clawed its way to No.22 in the UK… a major flop in Duran terms.

22

I DON'T WANT YOUR LOVE

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1988**

Big Thing's biggest hit, *I Don't Want Your Love* married airy funk with stuttering electronica. A case of writer's block for Le Bon left Nick Rhodes to pick up the slack lyrically, while new guitarist Warren Cuccurullo sparred with sessioneer Chester Kamen's "noise guitar". Another hired gun – ex-Average White Band drummer Steve Ferrone – took up live duties, and a single mix from Shep Pettibone did the rest. The album's pacemaker lit up the charts – UK No.14, US No.4, and No.1 in Italy. Eccellente!

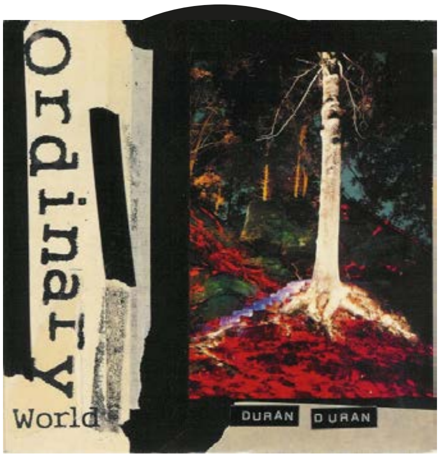


26

MY ANTARCTICA

RECORD LABEL **PARLOPHONE/EMI**
RELEASED **1990**

The Durans know how to nail a good ballad, and this is *Liberty*'s other clear frontrunner. While the group were far from happy with the album, Le Bon commented that it birthed "two of the best songs Duran's ever come up with". A hypnotic piano hook cuts through the ambience, while shimmering guitar ensured *My Antarctica* a place in band history. "As a song it's exquisite," Rhodes said. "Warren played some incredibly beautiful ambient reversed guitars on it. He's really like a magician, as well as a musician."



27

ORDINARY WORLD

RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1993**

This epic ballad introduced a bold new chapter as the initial transmission from '*The Wedding Album*'. The lyrics found Le Bon at the height of his powers. "We're surrounded by the desire for the super ordinary – super man, super life, video game explosion," he told VH1. "I wanted to say that the ordinary world is actually the most beautiful thing." The world agreed and a US No.1 spot beckoned, as did a mismatched duet with Pavarotti, who belted it out with Simon in Modena with full orchestral backing.

28

COME UNDONE

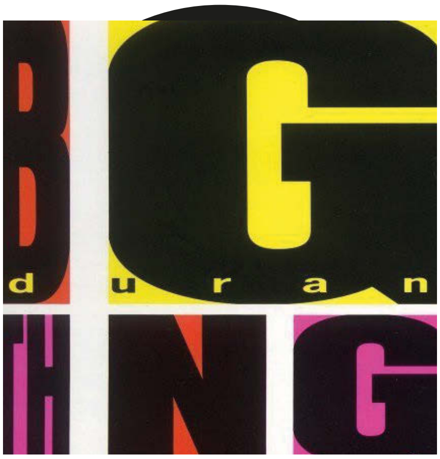
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1993**

Duran Duran had dropped off-radar before *Ordinary World* and this brooding classic heralded a fresh purple patch. The song evolved from Cuccurullo's heavily-flanged riff, originally intended for a side-project with Bush singer Gavin Rossdale. The addition of a drum loop from The Soul Searchers' *Ashley's Roachclip* was inspired, while session star Tessa Niles delivered a perfect vocal counterpoint. Despite the seemingly morose imagery, Le Bon wrote the lyrics for his wife as a birthday present.

23

ALL SHE WANTS IS
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1988**

Beginning with the title chanted over sequenced hi-hats, this anomalous second satellite from *Big Thing* found Duran deviating into Krautrock-influenced territories. Live bass was exchanged for a glossy, Numan-esque low-end pulse, while Warren's 'lead vamp guitar' circled dreamily around the whole affair. Its original working title of *Sex* perhaps explains the erotic leanings of the lyrics (and the moans over the outro), while the stop-motion video also contained plenty more sexual imagery.



24

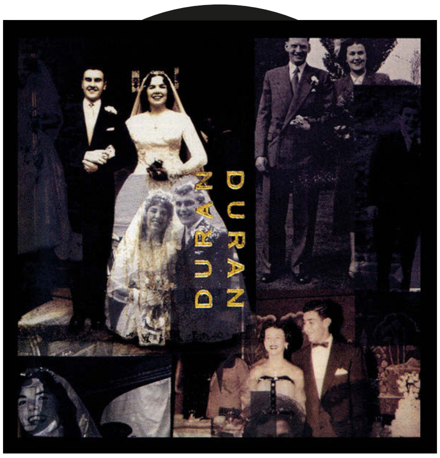
PALOMINO
RECORD LABEL **PARLOPHONE**
RELEASED **1988**

For *Big Thing*, the boys bid adieu to the funk-pop of *Notorious* and fixed their sights on a harder-edged sound. On an album inhabited by the hi-energy pop-rock of *Too Much Information* (with eyes on the stadium) and the heavily-sequenced *All She Wants Is* (with eyes on the club), this ballad was a restorative oddity; *Palomino* bathes in soft, ethereal synths before a stunning chorus surfaces through the panorama. Le Bon took inspiration from Picasso and, with John as his co-writer, fashioned this hidden gem.

25

SERIOUS
RECORD LABEL **PARLOPHONE/EMI**
RELEASED **1990**

Commandeering the soulful inflections of George Michael at his best and with guitar lines plucked straight from the Johnny Marr songbook, *Liberty*'s second offering chose an uncharted route of attack. The decision not to tour in support of the album and any lack of real marketing meant that, despite *Liberty*'s initial Top 10 placing, it was quickly lost to the ether – and with it went this sparkling piece of sophisti-pop. *Serious* managed a paltry UK No.48, and any further *Liberty* singles were called off by EMI.

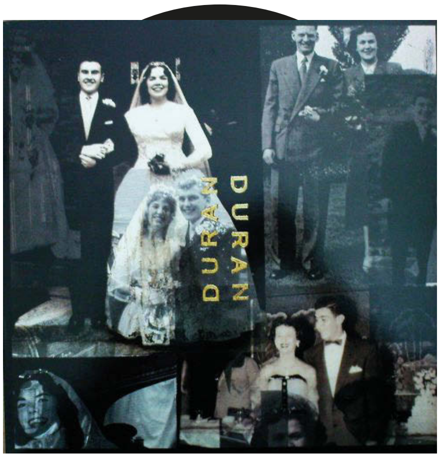


29

LOVE VOODOO
RECORD LABEL **PARLOPHONE/EMI**
RELEASED **1993**

"It's a twisted love story," Rhodes told *Stereogum*. "At the time we wrote it, we thought we were onto something – it's a killer chorus." The female vocal comes from Lamya, one of the singers of Soul II Soul. After *Liberty* misfired, the line-up slimmed down: out went drummer Sterling Campbell, in came drum machines and a fresh outlook. "The Eighties had ended and a lot of people wanted to lock the door, and close Duran Duran in that decade," said Rhodes. "We went back to basics and wrote and wrote, day after day."

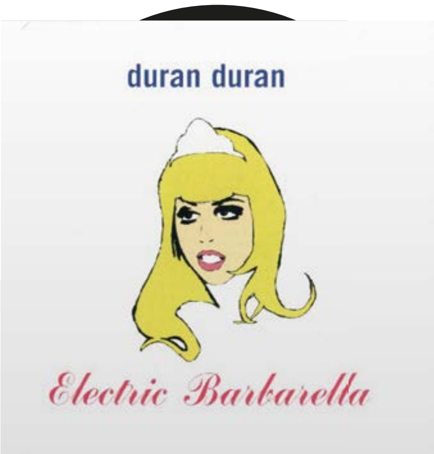
> "The Eighties had ended and a lot of people wanted to lock that door, and close Duran Duran in that decade. We went back to basics and wrote and wrote, day after day."
>
> **NICK RHODES**



30

SHELTER
RECORD LABEL **PARLOPHONE/EMI**
RELEASED **1993**

One of the band's most underrated tracks, *Shelter* announces itself via the trademark sampled stabs mined from past glories, apposing vocals that clash and blend like the tides of a turbulent sea – and the usual killer bass from John Taylor. With spirits at their lowest ebb, the group retreated to Warren Cuccurullo's London studio to record a batch of demos that would form the backbone of '*The Wedding Album*', including this neglected gem (available on the unofficial *Warren & Nick's House Demos* album).



31

ELECTRIC BARBARELLA
RECORD LABEL **EMI**
RELEASED **1999 (IN THE UK)**

This glittering piece of pop electronica foresaw the trash TV fetish surrounding lifelike robotic sex toys, while musically it aligned more with Nick and Warren's side-project, TV Mania. This first single from *Medazzaland* appeared in worrying times, with the covers album *Thank You* widely ridiculed and John Taylor turning on his heel midway through recording. The song maintained a stubborn flicker of greatness, and was claimed as the first legal download.

32

SOMEONE ELSE NOT ME
RECORD LABEL **HOLLYWOOD**
RELEASED **2000**

Pop Trash may have split fans in half, but the band's first collection of the new millennium held pockets of genius. Yes, it was a little overproduced, but this simple lovelorn ballad rested somewhere between *Strawberry Fields* psychedelia and *Siamese Dream*-era Smashing Pumpkins. While Italy and Latvia were the only territories that got it, it's the track that helped John Taylor decide he wanted back in, calling it "crazy beautiful". B-side *Starting To Remember* is astonishing.

33

(REACH UP FOR THE) SUNRISE
RECORD LABEL **EPIC**
RELEASED **2004**

The *Astronaut* album was the first followers had heard from the Fab Five since 1985's villainous masterpiece *A View To A Kill*. With Epic onboard, *Sunrise* was the reawakening everyone had hoped for. "We were listening to a lot of Ibiza-style dance music," said John Taylor. "*Sunrise* was definitely a conscious attempt to re-style the Duran aesthetic to fit into that contemporary European dance mould." Both single and album went Top 10. Duran Duran were back!

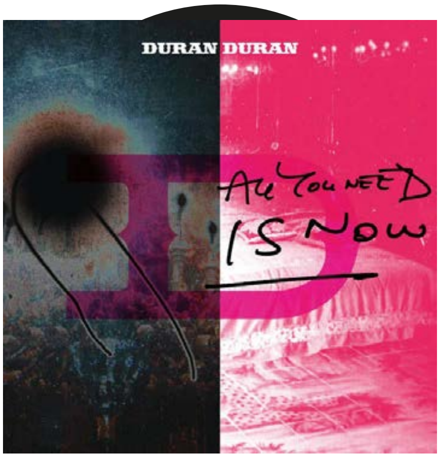
36

THE MAN WHO STOLE A LEOPARD
RECORD LABEL **TAPE MODERN**
RELEASED **2010**

Another grandiose highlight from *All You Need Is Now*, this was, for many, the crowning connection between band and producer. Inspired by Sixties crime thriller *The Collector* and with an intro that harks back to *Rio*'s minimal sonic palette, it slowly opens out into a stormy epic. Owen Pallett's cinematic score and Nick Rhodes' textured synths provided the backdrop, while an archetypal Le Bon melody provided the focus – ably supported by R&B soulstress Kelis.

"*Before The Rain* was very much like *The Chauffeur*. Simon already had that song before he joined the band, so it was quite eerie – it was almost like the same thing was happening 30 years later."

ROGER TAYLOR



37

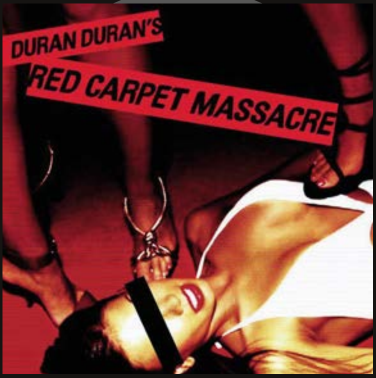
BEFORE THE RAIN
RECORD LABEL **TAPE MODERN**
RELEASED **2010**

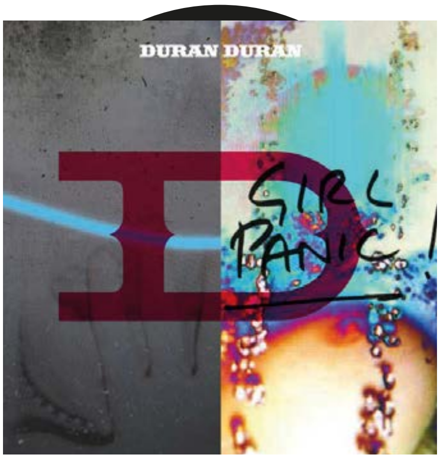
Yet more evidence that the Ronson-Duran match up was a favourable one, this heralded the return of the Fairlight, a machine integral to early successes. Le Bon's bitter tale of a man surrounded by "ghosts of guilt" bearing the burden of "murdered secrets" held a direct link to the past, too. "It was very much like *The Chauffeur*," remembered Roger. "Simon already had that song before he joined the band, so it was quite eerie… because it was almost like the same thing was happening 30 years later."

GUILTY PLEASURE

SKIN DIVERS
RECORD LABEL **EPIC**
RELEASED **2007**

For some, this assault on their sound – one of only a handful of tracks recorded with hip-hop overlord Timbaland – was a step too far, but the result is unlike anything else in Duran's catalogue. It was a tricky collaboration for the producer, too. "When Timbaland saw the guitar and the bass and the drums come in to the studio, I think he was mortified," remembered Rhodes. For John Taylor, it was "a f***ing nightmare".

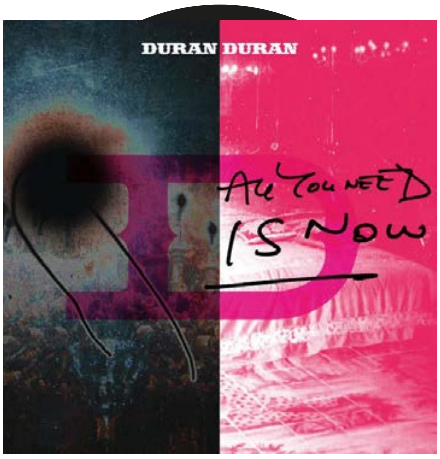




34

GIRL PANIC!
RECORD LABEL **TAPE MODERN**
RELEASED **2011**

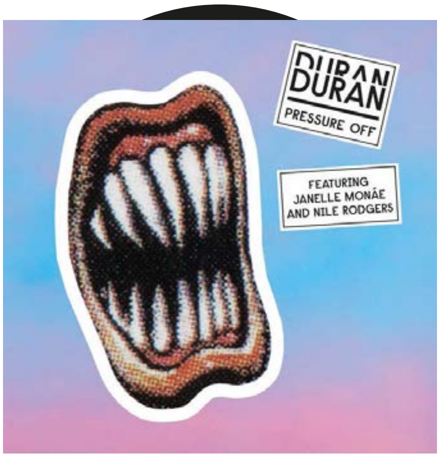
Having established the follies of chasing the zeitgeist with *Red Carpet Massacre*, *All You Need Is Now* was a welcome return to the blueprint. Thank heavens for Mark Ronson, who suggested an imaginary follow-up to *Rio*. Nick dusted off his analogue synths, John re-installed *Rio*-esque basslines, and stand-in Dom Brown emulated the Chic-meets-Pistols aesthetic. Jonas Åkerlund's video dutifully followed suit, reuniting the original Nineties supermodels.



35

BEING FOLLOWED
RECORD LABEL **TAPE MODERN**
RELEASED **2010**

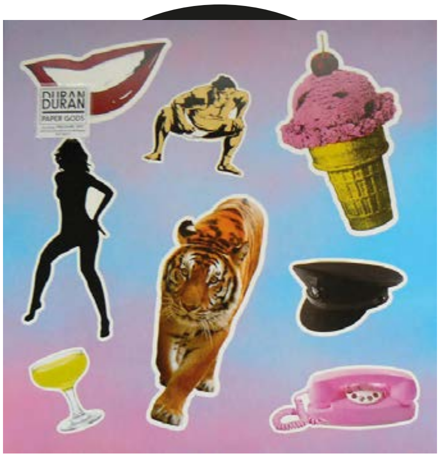
One of the superior songs from *All You Need Is Now*, with a surf guitar motif described by Nick as "pure Bond". "It's one of my favourite tracks on the album," he explained to Stereogum. "It's like an Eastern European spy song… but actually all about surveillance." Mark Ronson held it in high regard, too, choosing to debut this specific 'Return to *Rio*' on his East Village Radio prior to the album's release. Their best song for some time, on their best album for some time.



38

PRESSURE OFF
RECORD LABEL **WARNER BROS**
RELEASED **2015**

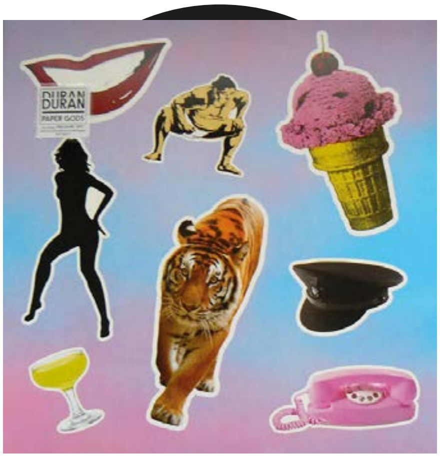
Co-written by the entire cast that appears on it, the lead single from *Paper Gods* set out the stall for an unusually collaborative new era. Mark Ronson, Mr Hudson and Nile Rodgers all chipped in, while Janelle Monae was given the rare honour of sharing the mic. The result? A roof-raising chorus that's overwhelmingly 'up'. Meanwhile, Rodgers' fizzing Strat brought the funk, a touch of Bowie-esque nostalgia came from Nick's pitch-bent synth, and John offered up a bassline that had his fingers "in shreds".



39

YOU KILL ME WITH SILENCE
RECORD LABEL **WARNER BROS**
RELEASED **2015**

Produced with, conceived by, and featuring Mr Hudson, this wrong-footed the faithful with its modish trap rhythm, but it was clear Duran Duran 2.0 were very much in effect. It had their boldest intro to date, a dirty bass, undulating atmospherics and a skyward melody that showcased the scope of Le Bon's voice. The latest rebirth was complete and this song helped *Paper Gods* to No.10 in the Billboard charts, their highest spot in 22 years. Note the lyrical reference to Bowie ("To drive another lad insane").



40

SUNSET GARAGE
RECORD LABEL **WARNER BROS**
RELEASED **2015**

By far the chirpiest offering from *Paper Gods*, and likely the most outright example of carefree 'pop' ever made by the band. It shows their urge to constantly evolve their sound, plus their joy at still being appreciated ("How did we get so far?/ Whatever happens, we're OK"). Mr Hudson may well be the source of the sunny vibes – for Le Bon, he "glued it all together". Beaming melodies and meandering guitars expand into a blissed-out middle eight, before we return to the celebrations – and it's feel-good perfection.

© RJ Capak/WireImage

Prizes aloft: John, Roger, Simon, Nick and Andy celebrate Duran Duran scooping a Lifetime Achievement gong at the MTV Video Music Awards in New York, August 2003

THE NEW CENTURY WOULD SEE THE HIGHS OF A SELL-OUT REUNION TOUR, CAREER RECOGNITION AND A FRESH IMPACT ON A NEW GENERATION – BUT THAT ALL SEEMED SOME WAY OFF AS DURAN DURAN BEGAN THE DECADE IN SOMETHING OF A CRISIS...

IAN WADE

ELDER STATE

Having left EMI in 1998, attention was turned to shopping the next album *Pop Trash* around various labels. Nick Rhodes admitted that it had been their most difficult Duran Duran album to make. Replying to a fan query on their official site, he explained: "Things felt very different without John… also Simon was having difficulty with some of the lyrics at this time, so I ended up writing more of them then I would have anticipated."

Though the band had initially enjoyed good relations with Hollywood Records, things went downhill – rapidly. When *Someone Else Not Me* became their lowest charting single in Britain, peaking at No.53, it was clear that the company didn't have the faintest idea how to handle a group of Duran's stature. The band grew increasingly weary, and Le Bon became depressed at the idea of going through all the whole process again with another album. By the time they began a 33-date tour of America in July 2000, they had agreed to end their deal with Hollywood.

Simon's relationship with Warren Cuccurullo had deteriorated, too, and he

The poor performance of the single *Someone Else Not Me* was a clear sign to the band that they needed to make some business changes – and fast

Duran Duran are snapped backstage at Webster Hall in New York City in August 2003 on the Reunion Tour

© James Devaney/WireImage

SMEN

Stephen Duffy and Nick Rhodes, aka The Devils, reimagined early Duran for 2002's *Dark Circles.* "Strange, sexy, charming and nostalgic," noted PopMatters

didn't want to make another album with him as part of the line-up, and thought the band didn't have a future if things continued as they were. As he told writer Steve Malins: "It was a complete disaster. I was thinking 'How do I get out of this?' I missed John terribly. The reason we never got a permanent bass player was quite simply because the seat was still left there for him. I didn't think he'd come back… not then, anyway. I'd have had him back in a shot, but Nick and Warren maybe felt a bit different about it."

"WE NEVER GOT A PERMANENT BASS PLAYER BECAUSE I MISSED JOHN TERRIBLY. THE SEAT WAS STILL THERE FOR HIM.

SIMON LE BON

SOMETHING I WANT TO SAY

As the band finished the tour with six nights at the House of Blues in West Hollywood, California, Simon bumped into John Taylor and his wife Gela as they were enjoying a coffee at the top-floor restaurant at Barneys New York in Beverly Hills. Gela, excited at meeting Simon for the first time, duly invited him and Nick over to the couple's house for lunch.

Having not so much as spoken to each other on the phone since Taylor had left the line-up in 1997, Simon and John offloaded their woes and feelings to each other, and soon the idea of reuniting the original five-piece group was being floated over a main course of penne arrabbiata. Nick initially wasn't wild on the idea, but by the time they were enjoying post-meal espressos, they'd called Roger. While Roger was somewhat sceptical about it, he agreed within 24 hours. The next move then was to see how Andy would react – and he came round to the idea when it was revealed that Roger was back onboard.

As Nick and Simon resumed the dates, there was the small matter of telling Warren he was no longer required… which could perhaps have been handled better, as neither Simon nor Nick actually called to tell him themselves. After announcing on his website that he was leaving Duran in 2001 to reignite his own band Missing Persons, Cuccurullo decided to launch a sex toy based on his own, erm, member – but that's not for here – and played his final shows with the band in Japan that June.

The five began the process by renting a house near San Tropez, shipping their gear and an engineer over, financing the sessions themselves and working together determinedly each day until midnight. There was still, however, unfinished business in the air. Nick was angry with John for leaving the last time, and all of them had to work to get to know each other again, along with their accompanying strengths, weaknesses and moodswings – and there were new battles of sobriety and anxiety over their families to add to the mix. Three songs from this initial 12-day reunion would eventually make it onto their comeback album.

The Dandy Warhols' *Welcome To The Monkey House* – with a sleeve referencing The Stones and the Velvet Underground – was produced by Nick Rhodes

Over the next year the band would carry on recording in Barnes, London, and also in Connecticut with Nile Rodgers; a longtime friend of Duran, Nile had been their first choice of producer, having worked with the original five. They also looked into reuniting with their original management Paul and Michael Berrow, but while matters looked promising at first, none of them could agree on anything. They eventually went with Wendy Laister – coincidentally, Nile Rodgers' cousin – and Magus Entertainment.

Keeping busy with side project The Devils with Stephen Duffy, Nick also did a spot of production for The Dandy Warhols' next album *Welcome To The Monkey House*. Nick roped in Simon for some

© Dave Benett/Getty Images

Duran Duran were honoured with yet another Lifetime Achievement award, this time by *Q* magazine in 2003

© James Devaney/WireImage

POP_UP The hugely popular Reunion Tour was welcomed as much by the band as the fans. "We wondered if we could recreate that incredible energy again," explained Nick, "and there was only one way to find out."

The band onstage in New York City on 27 August 2003, where a 16-song set culminated with *White Lines* and *Girls On Film*

backing vocals, and there was an appearance from Nile Rodgers on rhythm guitar on *I Am A Scientist*.

MUSIC BETWEEN US

By the time The Dandy Warhols album hit the shelves, Duran Duran were gearing up to begin their reunion tour. Although some members of the band were keen to have their own album ready before they hit the road, they had encountered great difficulty in securing a suitable deal for it. The music industry had started to undergo sweeping changes, and there was no longer the desire to risk signing a 'heritage act'.

Undaunted, the five announced a world tour that managed to sell out almost immediately, kicking off in Osaka, Japan, taking in two nights at the Budokan, a place they'd last sold out during their heyday, and then travelling across the States and supplying a rare support slot to Robbie Williams (although they claim it was more of a double bill) in New Zealand and Australia, and then whipping back through Singapore before the end of 2003. They snuck in a one-off London show at Kentish Town's Forum in October as part of a 25-year celebration, tying in with the re-promotion of the 1999 compilation *Greatest*; the event became one of the hottest tickets in town, and helped build up interest in the industry by demonstrating what demand for a Duran Duran gig looked like. Throw in the two Lifetime Achievement gongs they received from MTV and *Q* magazine, and it was as if the wider world was finally

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

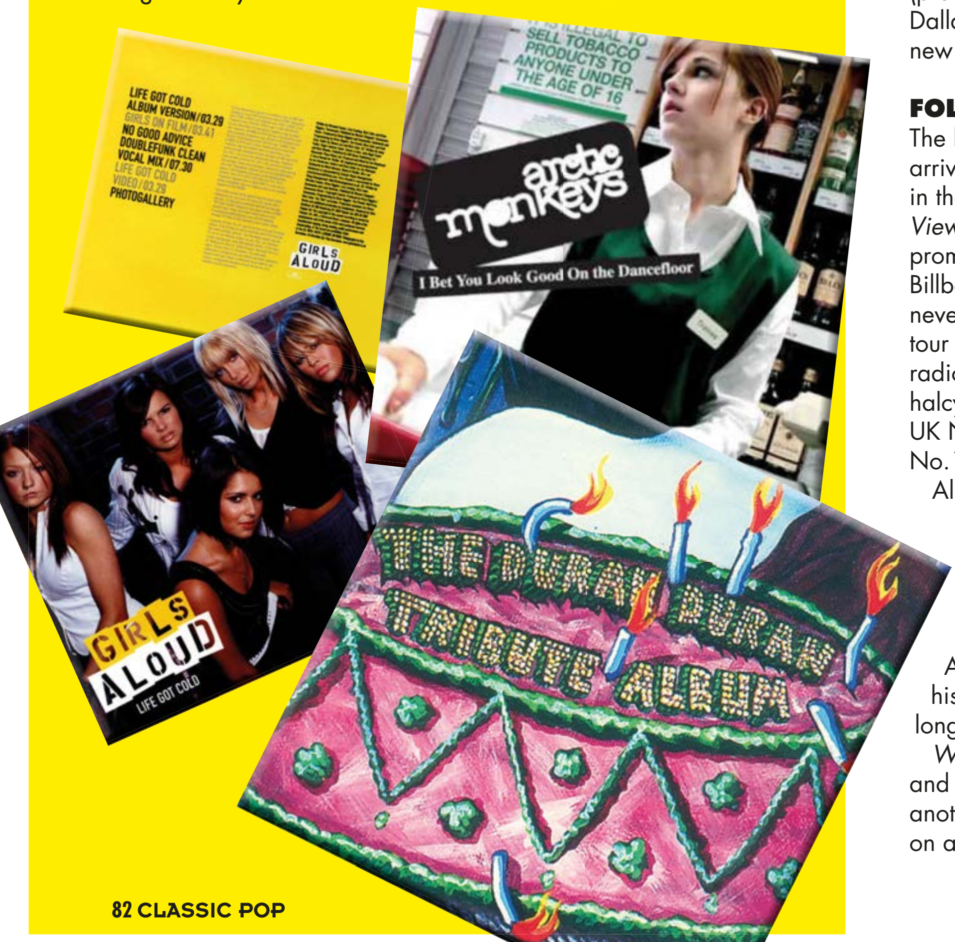
LOCKED IN THE EIGHTIES? NOT AT ALL: BY NOW, DURAN SEEMED TO BE EVERYWHERE

By the time that Duran Duran announced the reunion of the original Famous Five, their aesthetic, music and style was starting to show its effect on a new generation of musicians – especially among the new breed of American bands such as The Faint, The Bravery and, to a more successful degree, Las Vegas' the Killers. Suddenly it seemed okay to get a synth in, or recruit a stylish bassist not averse to eyeliner. Indeed, The Killers' lead singer Brandon Flowers managed to carry off wearing a salmon-pink blazer onstage, and claimed their breakthrough hit *Somebody Told Me* was "*Rio*… but with chest hair". There was also an air of Duran's style and presentation in other US turns such as Interpol and The Strokes (the *NME*'s Steve Sutherland cannily noted how each member of The Strokes seemed to echo a particular Duran).

An early Girls Aloud B-side saw them tackle *Girls On Film* (rather magnificently) and there were heavier acts tipping their hats, too, with unlikely covers on the imaginatively-titled tribute *The Covers Album* coming from Deftones, Jimmy Eat World and – slightly peculiarly – the ABBA-themed tribute Bjorn Again.

Another wave of emerging performers who revealed teases of Duran Duran were those loosely affiliated with the Electroclash scene. Scissor Sisters and Goldfrapp were both chosen (by Nick) to support the band's reunion shows. The elegant playboy-on-a-yacht vibe of *Rio* was evoked by Canadian DJ Tiga; Fischerspooner revealed a trashy Warholian glamour spectacle, and the dark, sleazy exclusivity of celebrity was channelled by Felix da Housecat, DJ Hell, The Hacker and Crossover. Belgian band Soulwax even named their *Any Minute Now* remix album *Nite Versions* in a nod to early Duran 12" mixes.

Another unlikely Duran Duran moment came with Arctic Monkeys' debut No.1 *I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor* in 2005, and the line "Your name isn't Rio, but I don't care for sand". Bearing in mind that none of the Monkeys had been born when *Rio* first came out, one thing was clear: Duran Duran's sixth single was by now a bona fide cultural reference.



More shiny statuette business at the Brits in 2004. "They successfully married music, image, style, performance and attitude – they had it all," praised Justin Timberlake

realising how amazing and groundbreaking they actually were. By the time 2004 got underway, they'd performed at a private Superbowl party and Justin Timberlake was handing them an Outstanding Achievement Award at The Brits, which they accompanied by playing a short set of greatest hits.

All this was helping to, as John put it, "rebuild the brand", and it would continue to do so as they reconvened the reunion tour in Dublin that April, the first stop on a 16-date tour across the UK, including five nights at Wembley Arena. The shows went down well with the critics, who appreciated that the full five had never performed *The Wild Boys* live together before; with numbers such *The Chauffeur* and *Tiger Tiger* getting an airing, they also admired the obvious breadth of the Duran catalogue. The tour did what it set out to prove – that Duran Duran were still very much a current band as opposed to being trapped in amber. They signed a new deal with Epic Records and got to work with producers Don Gilmore (previous clients: Good Charlotte, Linkin Park) and Dallas Austin (Gwen Stefani, Pink, TLC) to knock the new songs into album-ready shape.

FOLLOWING GIANT FOOTPRINTS

The lead *Astronaut* single *(Reach Up For The) Sunrise* arrived in October 2004, entering the chart at No.5 in the UK, making it their first Top Five hit since *A View To A Kill from 1985*. The Stateside signs were promising, too, as the song also hit the top of the Billboard Dance chart. Soon it was as if Duran had never been away as they embarked on a promo tour across the world, with just as many TV and radio commitments as they had endured during their halcyon days. They were buoyed even more by the UK No.3 success of *Astronaut*, and a healthy debut of No.17 in the US when it arrived later that month.

All was going swimmingly until November, when it was announced that Andy was suffering from exhaustion and had to rest for a few weeks. Roger managed to break a bone in his foot during a London show in January, which meant they had to cancel an upcoming tour in Japan. Andy also had to step away from the tour when his father died that March; he was replaced by long-standing guitarist Dom Brown.

What Happens Tomorrow was released as a single and reached a respectable No.11 in the UK, and another No.2 over in Italy, as the band embarked on a 44-date jaunt across North America, finishing

Duran Duran on stage during Live 8 Rome at the Circus Maximus on 2 July 2005. The band performed four songs: ***(Reach Up For The) Sunrise, Ordinary World, Save A Prayer*** and ***The Wild Boys.***

© Christopher Furlong/Franco Origlia/Getty Images

Simon onboard Drum in Glasgow on 16 May 2005. This time the yacht completed the Fastnet race and also raised money for the original crew's saviours, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

at New York's Madison Square Garden in April by playing to over 400,000 fans. While the sales of *Astronaut* were decent enough, John Taylor admitted that "I would have liked it to have connected with more people, but it's put the band back on the map now, and the next one hopefully will do more for us."

Over the summer of 2005 the band would continue to get their dues, with an Ivor Novello award for Outstanding Contribution to British Music, a handful of big dates including Roskilde festival, and Live 8, which they contributed to from Rome. As September approached, the world tour wound down, with extra-curricular activities such as Le Bon taking part in a race on the original Drum yacht as a sort-of anniversary of when it first capsized, and John and Nick compiling a compilation called *Only After Dark*, based loosely on a typical DJ set of Nick's at their original watering hole, The Rum Runner.

Plans to make a new album were drafted, and after the original offer of the opportunity to record their next LP aboard a superyacht fell through, the five of them headed to Andre Agassi's mansion in San Francisco in September to write songs. Work was mostly uninterrupted, with only a few public engagements – a string of UK dates ending at London's Earls Court in December, a cover of John Lennon's *Instant Karma* for Amnesty, an appearance at the Nobel Prize Awards, and playing the Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy – across the next few months, and the band began sessions with producer Michael Patterson (who'd worked on albums by Beck, Ladytron and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club) in London.

Initial reports from inside the camp were good, with talk of 15 songs nearly completed, and Roger Taylor suggesting that it was "more direct and a return to our dance and new wave origins". Speaking to XM Radio, John added: "We'd been on the road with the reunion tour for a couple of years and we were feeling pretty confident. We felt that we'd found ourselves again as musicians, so we were quite excited to come off the road and start writing and recording straight away. Our confidence was such, we felt we didn't need a producer… we could make all the decisions ourselves, so we wrote songs quite quickly and really felt that we had an album."

There was further talk of an album coming out that May ahead of a possible

US tour – but then everything went quiet for a few months. The album, now titled *Reportage*, was turning into something of an ordeal, with Sony saying – according to John – they "could hear the second and third singles but not the first single" and suggesting that Duran should work with a producer on a couple of tracks. The band met Youth, who'd done wonders for The Verve, James and Paul McCartney, at his studio in Spain, but once Sony had suggested Timbaland, with whom the band had previously met and discussed working together, sessions were arranged for October but brought forward a few weeks so that Justin Timberlake could be involved. Both men joined the band along with Nate 'Danja' Hills at Manhattan Center Studios in New York City for writing and recording sessions, yet Andy Taylor didn't appear… and he wasn't planning to, either.

LAST MEN STANDING

On 26 October 2006, Duran Duran issued an official statement containing some serious news. "As of last weekend, the four of us have dissolved our partnership and will be continuing as Duran Duran without Andy, as we have reached a point in our relationship with him where there is an unworkable gulf between us and we can no longer effectively function together," they announced gravely. "Although obviously disappointed and saddened about this, we are excited about the next chapter of the Duran Duran story and look forward to seeing you all soon."

Speaking after the split, John suggested that they and Andy hadn't been on the same page for some time. "Four out of the five of us have rediscovered each other and realised that we're the best friends we've ever had," he pointed out. "And we're enormously grateful to have each other in our lives… and there's nobody I'd rather make music with, and I can say the same for the other three. I don't think I could say that for Andy."

The whole recording project, it seemed, was teetering in the balance, and indeed – despite having registered some of the songs to ASCAP, and members of the band having mentioned completed titles such as *48 Hours Later*, *Criminals In The Capitol*, *Traumatized* and *Transcendental Mental* in interviews – a decision was made to ditch the entire *Reportage* album that they'd worked on with Andy and to begin again on a new set of songs, based on the three they had completed with Timbaland.

As the troublesome palaver of 2006 came to an end, news came through that the band were on the bill for the Princess Diana Memorial Concert, taking place at the newly-rebuilt Wembley Stadium on 1 July. With that in mind, they decided to crack on with the next album in the new year.

The decision to rewrite the LP after Andy's departure was actually down to a variety of factors, as Le Bon revealed: "When we sat down and listened to what we had done on our own, we didn't feel we had a lead track, so we got in touch with Timbaland, who was the only producer out there that we knew we all liked." After the initial sessions in New York, the band began work at Metropolis Studios in London with Timbaland and Hills, along with mixer Jimmy Douglass. Justin Timberlake was back in the studio with them in July, coming up with *Falling Down*.

Alongside the Princess Diana concert, where Duran Duran played with Take That, Bryan Ferry,

THE KEY RECORDINGS

STRUGGLES, SIDE PROJECTS, SIGNS OF LIFE… AND A WONDERFUL REUNION

POP TRASH

2000

The band's first post-EMI release *Pop Trash* suffered somewhat under Hollywood Records' promotion and sold badly, but there are a few gems – the single *Someone Else Not Me*, *Playing With Uranium*, *Last Day On Earth* and *Pop Trash Movie* – on what was considered very much a fans-only release. This was the last album to feature Warren Cuccurullo on guitar before things came to a head and the future of Duran Duran suddenly seemed to be in jeopardy. When released in June 2000, it limped to a mere No.53 in the UK and No.135 in the States. Simon, Warren and Nick now own the rights to it, and it seems that hindsight may eventually view *Pop Trash* more kindly.

DARK CIRCLES

2002

Recorded as The Devils, *Dark Circles* is a Duran Duran album in all but name and is as valid as Arcadia or The Power Station to the band's story. This collaboration between Nick Rhodes and Stephen Duffy came about after Duffy unearthed an old tape recording of a live, pre-Simon Le Bon concert from 1979; shortly afterwards he bumped into Nick, typically, at a fashion show, and the pair decided to rework the songs. It offers a real insight into the band's origins, and the use of vintage equipment reveals an artier, moodier sound – an interesting counterpoint to the pop finesse Duran would soon master. The Devils played two gigs, one in London, the other in Cologne.

ASTRONAUT

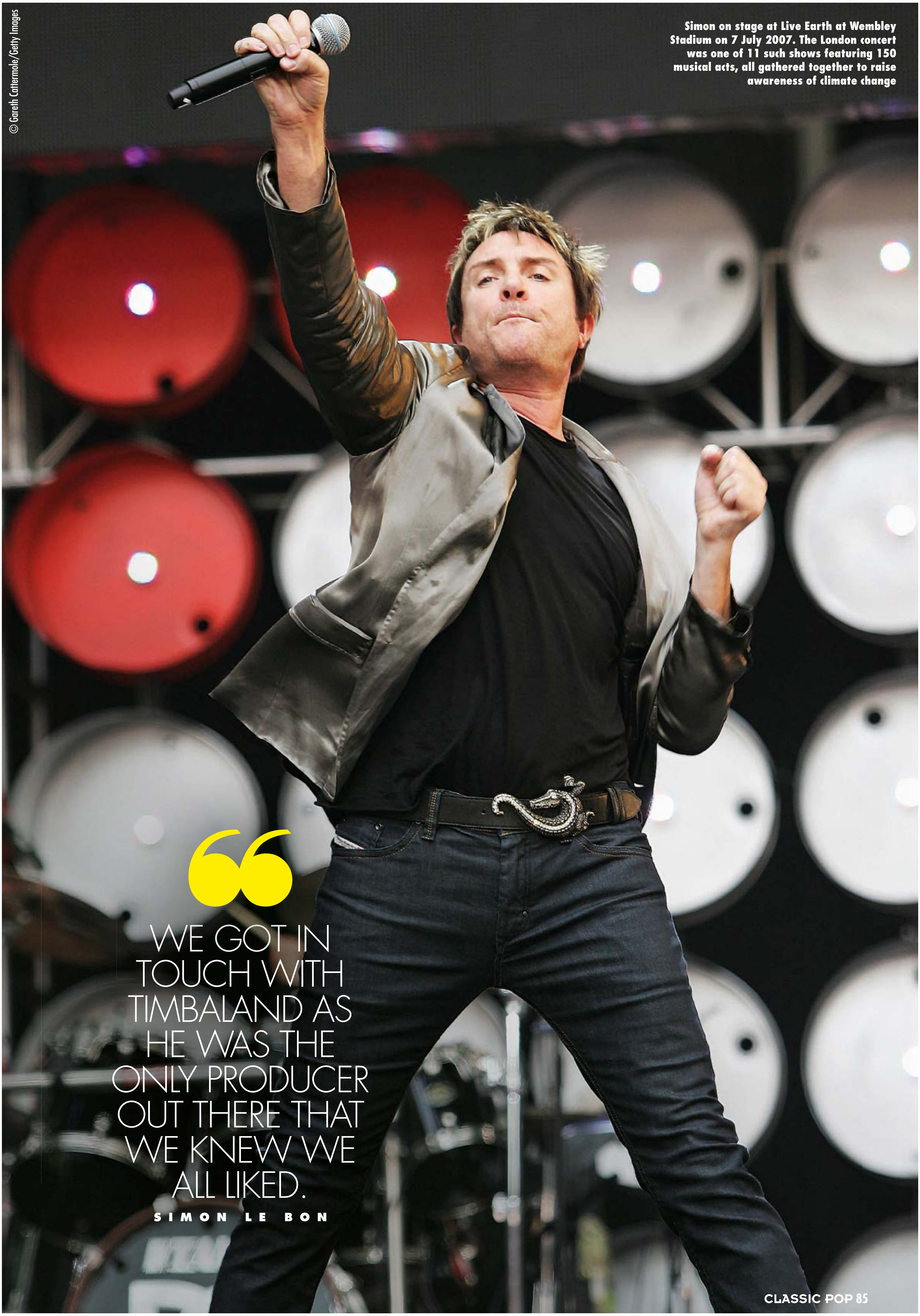
2004

Convening a reunion of the original line-up just when their influence was beginning to be felt on a fresh generation of bands was a wise move, but there was even better news – *Astronaut* proved that a group of musicians who hadn't recorded in a room together for 20 years could still come up with magic, and tracks such as *(Reach Up For The) Sunrise*, *What Happens Tomorrow* and *Nice* could even sit perfectly happily alongside the classics on the comeback tour. It also made a decent showing on the charts, returning Duran Duran to the US Top 20. It became the band's first Top Three album in the UK since their last five-piece effort, *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, and was certified gold.

RED CARPET MASSACRE

2007

From the wreckage of the aborted *Reportage* album (and the Andy dramas that surrounded it), Duran Duran served up songs with a more contemporary sheen, with Timbaland onboard. Standouts such as *Falling Down* and *Nite-Runner* helped frame an album of respectable updates of the band's sound, but while the critics weren't too harsh, there was a feeling of limited appeal – past the fanbase, at least. Again due to shonky treatment from the record company, it failed to follow on from the highs of *Astronaut*'s success and for some time was absent from the likes of Spotify. After its long-winded recording process, the band were probably just relieved it came out at all.



© Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images

Simon on stage at Live Earth at Wembley Stadium on 7 July 2007. The London concert was one of 11 such shows featuring 150 musical acts, all gathered together to raise awareness of climate change

"WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH TIMBALAND AS HE WAS THE ONLY PRODUCER OUT THERE THAT WE KNEW WE ALL LIKED.

SIMON LE BON

© Steve Thorne/Redferns

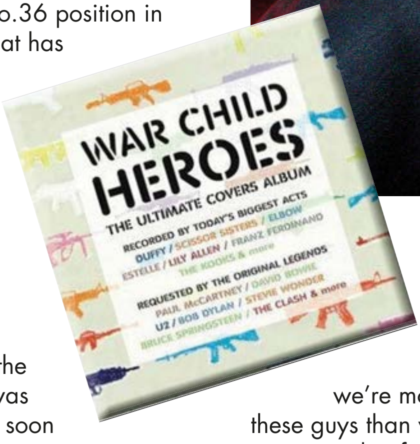
Roger Taylor providing the vital pulse at the National Indoor Arena, Birmingham, on 7 July 2008

© Getty Images AsiaPac

Elton John and Rod Stewart, the band were back at Wembley a week later to participate in the London leg of the global concert for Live Earth, on a bill starring such acts as Beastie Boys, Madonna, Snow Patrol and Genesis.

Red Carpet Massacre was due to come out in November, and to herald its release the band announced a residency of shows at New York's Barrymore Theatre. These were cut short due to a strike, so the last two took place at the legendary Roseland Ballroom. The band played the entirety of *Massacre* for the first half, then delivered a greatest hits set. When the album eventually emerged, it romped in at a somewhat disastrous No.44 in the UK, only bettered slightly by a No.36 position in the US. Even in Italy, a country that has long held Duran as superstars, the album reached a disappointing No.10. Mixed reviews didn't help, and it was considered something of a failure, especially since it followed a Top 3 album.

As 2007 ended, despite solid touring and promotion, Sony's meddling in the long-gestating album process had exasperated the band so much that the decision was made to escape from the deal as soon as possible. The Red Carpet Massacre Tour, however, kicked off in New Zealand with a batch of festivals, followed by co-headlining V Festival with Smashing Pumpkins. The tour continued through the Far East including Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong and Korea; then it was back to Canada and the US for much of April and May, and then over to Europe – including making history by becoming the first band to ever play at the Louvre Museum in Paris – then South America, and finishing in Montclair, New Jersey, a week before Christmas.



In March 2009, news emerged that the band were back in the studio, this time with Mark Ronson and one-time Kaiser Chief Nick Hodgson. "OK you've guessed it, we're moving in a different direction with these guys than with Timbaland and Justin T," Simon announced to fans via the band's official blog. "It feels very good I have to say. MODERN ENGLISH ROCK is what it's all about for us."

Ronson had previously encountered the Durans in July 2008 when they'd performed a James Bond medley – including, naturally, *A View to A Kill* – at La Cigale theatre in Paris during the Experience Paris show on 2 July 2008. This was the first time Ronson and the band had played together, and a recording of it became a bonus download track on the *War Child: Heroes* album, released in February.

POP_UP "Initially, I had to learn 20 songs in two days for my first Duran show," replacement guitarist Dom Brown told dailyduranie.com. "I'm a strong believer in keeping to the original spirit of the song as much as possible."

Spring 2008, and Duran play all four locations of the Australian V Festival as part of a short Red Carpet Massacre Tour down under

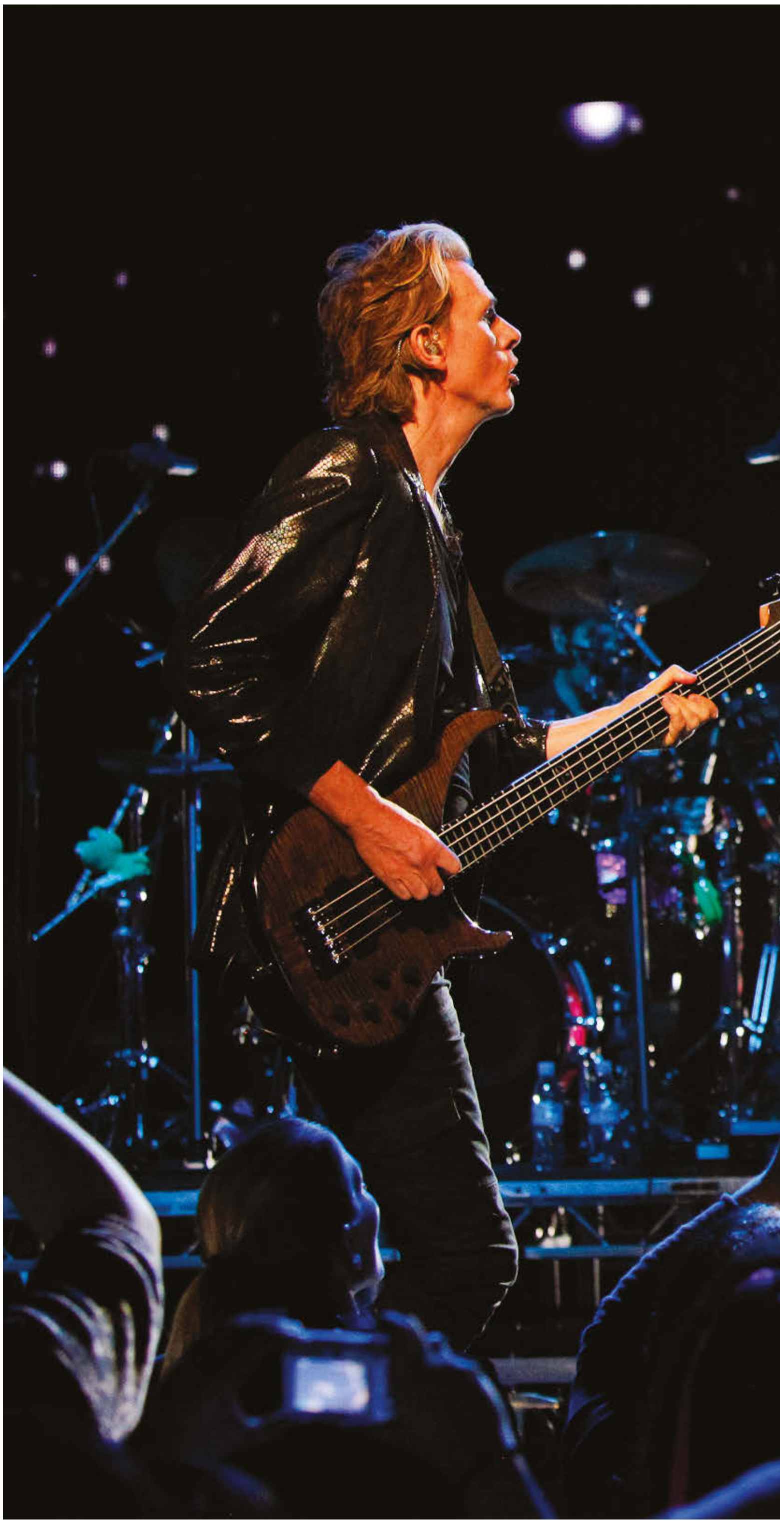
Mark Ronson wields a guitar alongside Simon at the Lovebox Weekender in Hackney, London, July 2009

© Brian Rasic/Getty Images

Sessions progressed well, with an excited Simon claiming: "In the five days we've worked there, we've seen the nuts of eight new songs starting to grow on our tree. It's daunting for me to know where to start, if I'm honest."

A summer tour of eight dates ended with a set at London's Lovebox Weekender, where Ronson joined them onstage. The culmination of the decade witnessed a wide variety of activities: the band still working with Ronson and welcoming Dom Brown into the writing process, Simon throwing himself into an array of guest vocals and essay contributions, Nick busying himself with art auctions and design projects, Roger DJing, and John jamming with other musicians. What on earth would Duran do next? ■

FIVE DECADES of DURAN DURAN



TEARS! BREAK-UPS! SEMI-NAKED PILLOW FIGHTS! BACK IN 2012, TO COINCIDE WITH HIS UPCOMING AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE PLEASURE GROOVE: LOVE, DEATH & DURAN DURAN, BASSIST JOHN TAYLOR SPOKE TO CLASSIC POP ABOUT THE HIGH HIGHS AND LOW LOWS OF BEING IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL BANDS…

WYNDHAM WALLACE

Courtesy of John Taylor

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Duran Duran's co-founder and bass player, John Taylor, is on the phone to *Classic Pop*, calling from… actually, he's not entirely sure. He thinks for a moment, before tentatively suggesting that he might be in Memphis, Tennessee.

The previous day was the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death and, tonight, Taylor's band is headlining the city's 6,500-capacity Botanic Garden. But this is the middle of a 15-date US trip, which is itself sandwiched in the middle of a year-long world tour, and – just like when the band first toured the US in 1981 – he's struggling to keep track.

It's hardly surprising: Duran Duran may now be veterans of an unusually long career, with sales of 80 million albums under their belt [100 million in 2018], but they're working hard, hungry for success and eager to write. "You only have to walk out on stage to be reminded that we're loved," Taylor says, "and that there's a good reason for us to continue doing what we do."

It's been an extraordinary journey. Formed in Birmingham at the tail end of the Seventies by Nigel John Taylor and his friend Nick Bates – who, like Taylor, would soon alter his name, in his case to the more seductive Nick Rhodes – Duran Duran took only a short time to reach dizzying heights of success. Indeed, it wasn't long before they were christened The Fab Five in homage to The Beatles. The pop mainstream

Above **At the Nokia Theatre in LA in 2011, Duran showed that 33 years and several line-up changes after their 1978 formation, they were still going strong…**
Left **…and the fans were still lapping it up**

Right **(L-R) John Taylor, Nick Rhodes, Roger Taylor, Andy Taylor and Simon Le Bon, 1982** *Below* **(L-R) John and Simon pictured in 1981**

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adored them, making them pin-ups for a generation of stirrup-trousered, feather-haired teeny-boppers. And a glamorous life beyond their wildest Brummie dreams made them friends with both the establishment (Princess Diana named them as her favourite band) and the anti-establishment (Andy Warhol was reputed to have said of Nick Rhodes, "I love him. I worship him. I masturbate to Duran Duran videos.").

But the music press rarely took them seriously, something Warhol can hardly have helped: the manner in which they were embraced by a youthful crowd dominated by young girls provoked critics to dismiss them as little more than pretty boys. Even now – though their work has been re-evaluated and their credibility is as high as it's ever been – there are many for whom that image remains true. In his book, *Spirit Of Talk Talk*, Chris Roberts refers to Duran Duran as "sub-glam pop tartlets", but their story is more complicated than that. It's a classic tale of a talented, charismatic band getting swept up by the marketing machine, being forced to confront the mystery of what it was that made them who they are, before – having overcome numerous personal and musical difficulties – finding the conviction to emerge victorious once again. That they made it this far is almost beyond belief.

"It's just not that kind of career path, is it?" Taylor laughs. "You want to be in a pop group. You're thinking, 'How do we get onto *Top Of The Pops*?' [At 17] I was very much in the moment, and the only plan was how to get onto the stage of the Birmingham Odeon."

70s GROWING FROM PUNK ROCK ROOTS

For a band that soon came to represent the polar opposite of the wild free-for-all that was punk music, it's surprising to learn that Duran Duran were actually born out of that movement. "I'd identified with musicians since I was 12 or 13," Taylor recalls, "but I wasn't really thinking that was something I could do. Punk made me think, 'Wait a minute – I can figure out three chords. And I know a couple of other guys who can do about the same.' It was just enough to get us into someone's bedroom with a couple of guitars and a couple of drums. And I found that when I was banging things in the company of others, I was happiest."

Taylor and Rhodes, who first met in 1973, were obsessive music fans from day one, initially bound by a mutual passion for Mick Ronson's work with David Bowie and Bryan Ferry's sartorial style. It wasn't long before they were combing the pages of *NME*, playing the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy In The UK* from their bedroom windows, sporting The Clash slogans on their shirts and timidly sipping coke at Blondie shows.

"The biggest single message that I got from punk rock was, 'The less you know, the better you're going to be at it,'" Taylor remembers. "You didn't need to go to music school. You didn't have to pay your dues. That was even frowned upon. By the time I was 17, I followed music closely, picking up on local punk bands and watching them grow. I could see how it could be done."

Taylor's first musical exploits didn't include Rhodes but in the latter years of that decade, they began to experiment together, auditioning musicians, trading singers with other local bands – including Stephen "Tin Tin" Duffy, later frontman for The Lilac Time – and looking for a line-up that matched their vision. While punk provided the initial spur, however, there were other genres – both in Britain

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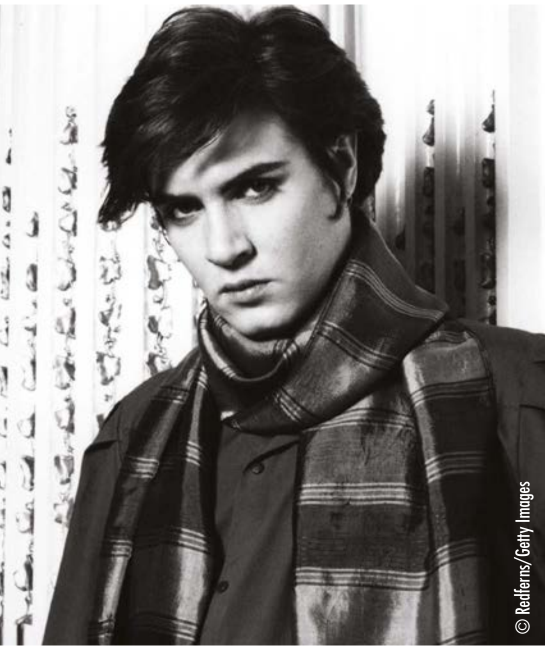
and blowing in across the Atlantic – that began to capture their imagination.

"The original ethos of punk was about originality," Taylor explains. "It was about being different, and I started seeing a lot of bands that were just trying to be the Sex Pistols, which didn't interest me. I started looking sideways to see things that were happening. Nick and I were the best of friends and we used to go to a lot of shows together. We started seeing things – electronic stuff like Kraftwerk and The Human League – and started hearing disco. Chic were a huge inspiration to me. They were like a state-of-the-art American R&B band, but they actually had quite a lean sound to them. They weren't like Philly soul. They didn't have that big orchestral sound to them. You could hear the power trio at the centre of it. And, from disco, we started getting into syncopation and developing this funky punk thing."

Funk and punk aren't, perhaps, the kind of things you'd associate with Duran Duran retrospectively, but as the band's line-up settled, so did the sound. Drummer Roger Taylor joined them from another local act, The Scent Organs, alongside Geordie Andy Taylor, described by John Taylor as "a metal motherf***er on guitar". The final ingredient was vocalist Simon Le Bon, a drama student at Birmingham University recommended by a friend from the Rum Runner, a club whose owners, Paul and Michael Berrow, became the band's first managers.

"I started playing bass," Taylor goes on. "I really liked what happened when I played with Rog. We started working on grooves like *Another One Bites The Dust* or *Good Times*, and started locking in. And that wasn't really something that went on in punk. Everybody just played chords and notes together."

Throughout 1980, convinced of the band's potential, the Berrows provided



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"PUNK MADE ME THINK, 'WAIT A MINUTE – I CAN FIGURE OUT THREE CHORDS. AND I KNOW A COUPLE OF GUYS WHO CAN DO THE SAME.'"

them with rehearsal space at their club, as well as booking them to play shows that allowed them to develop their live chemistry. They also found the band an agent and, by November, Duran Duran were opening countrywide for Hazel O'Connor, star of the hit musical film *Breaking Glass*. By the end of the year, they'd signed to EMI.

80s

WORLD AT THEIR FEET

Planet Earth was Duran Duran's first single, released in February 1981. So underground were they at this stage that even John Peel played it, but the single was soon making its way up the British charts, peaking at No.12. Its follow-up, *Careless Memories*, only just dented the Top 40, but their eponymous debut album took off on the back of third single *Girls On Film*, its success often credited to a video filmed by Kevin Godley and Lol Creme. Banned by the BBC, it stirred up considerable controversy, as anything involving lingerie-clad models engaging in a pillow fight, their cleavages soaked with Champagne, might.

"It was almost like being on the set of a porno movie," Taylor remembers. "It's something I've never done but I imagine to be a really… awkward… I mean, I imagine it would be really weird to be in a room with that kind of thing going on. This wasn't quite that, but it was still pretty… er… you know…" He searches for the right word. "It was kind of sexy," he eventually concedes, "and it was kind of weird. I was glad to be done with that particular shoot! But the product of it was quite magnificent, really. There was a guy I met in Memphis yesterday who said, 'Oh, man, we used to go to the Antenna Club. They had this video screen above the dancefloor, and we'd watch your videos and dance!' So by the time we got to the States in the autumn of '81, that video was really hot for us."

The album was produced by Colin Thurston at EMI's suggestion – a popular choice among the band, given that he'd co-engineered Bowie's *"Heroes"* with Tony Visconti. Glossy and souped-up, *Duran*

1978 Duran Duran are formed in Birmingham by friends John Taylor and Nick Rhodes. Roger Taylor and Andy Taylor are recruited

1979 Student Simon Le Bon joins the band as singer, completing the classic Duran Duran line-up

END OF 1980 Duran Duran secure their first major contract, signing to EMI

FEB 1981 The band release their debut single, *Planet Earth*. It peaks at No.12 in the UK singles chart

Duran showcased the band's more exploratory side with the moody *Night Boat* and the instrumental *Tel Aviv*, though these were overshadowed by the singles.

"Colin did exactly what one would want out of a producer," Taylor says. "He brought the absolute best out of us. We were lucky to work with a producer and engineer who was able to give each band member the attention that was necessary. I hate the photograph on the front of the album, but the sound of the record: he did an incredible job."

Duran Duran reached No.3 in the UK albums chart and caused a ripple in the US, where the band soon embarked upon their first tour. They took advantage of their rapidly growing global profile and followed up on their debut swiftly, releasing *Rio* less than a year later. Its cover, encapsulating the androgyny of the then-dominant New Romantic movement, could've been mistaken for an Athena poster. However, the album's content was often tougher than this suggests, Andy Taylor indulging his rock tendencies amid Rhodes' synthesisers on tracks like *Hungry Like The Wolf* and *New Religion*. There was room for darker material, too, with *Save A Prayer* and *The Chauffeur* both showcasing a brooding, meditative side that was reflected in Le Bon's extravagant lyrics (which included the memorable lines "And the sun drips down, bedding heavy behind, the front of your dress all shadowy lined").

The record was written during the long months of touring that had followed the band's debut album, and validated the work ethic that Taylor insists is at the heart of their ongoing success. "There's a point in your career when you get this opportunity to work," he says. "You're getting feedback and you know you're not just writing songs for yourself, that there's a market and people are actually interested in what you have to say."

However, such success often comes at a price, as the band found out when they knuckled down to write their third album, *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*.

"We brought in a different producer, which turned out to be a good thing," recalls Taylor. "But we also chose not to record the album in England, which caused a lot of problems. There was a slight sense of displacement going on because we'd spent a lot of time away

"BY THE TIME WE WERE ON TOUR BEHIND THE REFLEX AND THE THIRD ALBUM, I'D DEVELOPED SOME PRETTY UNHEALTHY HABITS."

JUNE 1981 The band's self-titled debut album peaks at No.3 in the UK albums chart

JULY 1981 No doubt helped by the BBC banning the video for being "too pornographic", *Girls On Film* hits No.5 in the UK singles chart

1986 Following the departure of Andy Taylor and Roger Taylor, John Taylor, Le Bon and Rhodes become a trio

OCT 1986 The band release their first-ever single as a threesome. *Notorious* peaks at No.7 in the UK

Fifth album *Big Thing* is released, reaching No.15 in the UK albums chart

1989-1991 Duran Duran's popularity wanes as the grunge movement takes off

JAN 1993 The band make a comeback with their first big hit of the Nineties, *Ordinary World*. It achieves a No.6 place in the UK singles chart

APRIL 1995 Duran Duran release an album of covers, *Thank You*. Despite hitting No.12 in the UK albums chart, it gets a lukewarm critical reception

JAN 1997 John Taylor announces that he's departing the band, leaving Duran Duran with just two original members, Rhodes and Le Bon

1999 The band part ways with their record label, Capitol/EMI

2000 John Taylor, Andy Taylor and Roger Taylor rejoin the band, restoring Duran Duran to their original line-up

AUG 2003 The band receive MTV's coveted Lifetime Achievement Award…

FEB 2004 …followed by the Outstanding Contribution Award at the Brits

OCT 2004 Having signed to Epic, Duran Duran release the album *Astronaut*. It enters the UK albums chart at No.3

OCT 2006 Andy Taylor leaves the band for the second time, citing an "unworkable gulf" between himself and the rest of the group

NOV 2007 The band release their 12th studio album, *Red Carpet Massacre*. It debuts at No.44 in the UK albums chart

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Left **Performing at Wembley Arena, May 1987, with Warren Cuccurullo (right)**
Below **Glammed up for a studio shoot with Fin Costello, 1983**

from home, and I think that, if anything, we'd have all been quite happy to stay in London for a few months. But we didn't. We went to the South of France and we had a lot of technical problems down there. So we ended up going to the West Indies, to AIR Studios, and we had a lot of technical problems there. You start thinking, 'Maybe some of the problems are in our head.' But we went from there to Australia." He giggles: "It was a crazy, very, very expensive and very indulgent way to write nine songs!"

By this time, the attention was starting to drain the band. "When you've got people camped outside your bedroom window morning, noon and night, you start questioning whether that's what you signed up for," Taylor sighs. "That was probably the point when it started getting… I don't want to say dangerous, but by the time we were on tour behind *The Reflex* and the third album, I'd developed some pretty unhealthy habits."

However, Taylor argues that any excessive behaviour had little adverse effect on the sessions for 1983's *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*. "I think we made the best album we could've made under the circumstances," he states confidently. "That's when producers are so important."

All the same, despite massive worldwide success – it was the band's first chart-topping album in the UK, while *The Reflex* gave them their first US No.1 single – *Seven* was the last album the original line-up would make together for almost 20 years. Instead, they split off into side projects, Le Bon, Rhodes and Roger Taylor forming the swashbuckling Arcadia, and John Taylor and Andy Taylor hooking up with Robert Palmer for the rockier Power Station. They did, however, squeeze out the title track for a James Bond film, *A View To A Kill*, and a live album, *Arena*, which Taylor admits was "overmixed".

The latter was perhaps most notable for the inclusion of a studio version of *The Wild Boys*, their first collaboration with Nile Rodgers, co-founder of Chic, as producer. It was written for a proposed adaptation of William S Burroughs' book of the same name, due to be directed by Russell Mulcahy, who'd helped establish the band's playboy image with videos, including *Rio*, filmed in Antigua, and *Save A Prayer* in Sri Lanka. The project sadly fell through, and Duran Duran's appearance at 1985's Live Aid would be the last time all five members would appear on stage until 2003.

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Exhausted, Roger Taylor confirmed his departure in 1986, and worse was to come. By the time Le Bon, Rhodes and Taylor reconvened for the recording of *Notorious* later that year, "we didn't really know what Andy was doing. He was messing around and wasn't really giving us a straight answer as to whether he wanted to stay in the band or not."

Nile Rodgers had been hired to produce the *Notorious* sessions and, for a while, he stepped in on guitar before the trio hired Warren Cuccurullo, an associate of Frank Zappa's, to fill Andy Taylor's shoes. Meanwhile, the Average White Band's Steve Ferrone – "a monster drummer!" – took over the drum stool.

"Nile was enormously important in bringing that album to a close," Taylor confides, "and giving us the confidence that we could continue. He took us seriously as a trio because he wasn't phased by the fact that only three of the band had showed up. He was just, 'Hey, well, we'll make it work, you know?'"

The title track would prove to be central to the album's success. "When you've got a song like that, you know you've got a future," the bassist laughs.

Sadly, the album was met with a relatively lukewarm reception, despite the horn-embellished funk of hit single *Skin Trade*, which found Le Bon adopting a falsetto voice.

Big Thing (1988), which saw them lean upon house music while indulging new technological skills, was less popular still. "I suppose, by that point, our lifestyles had started to catch up with us," Taylor concedes. "We'd all got wives and girlfriends, and we were ready to take our foot off the accelerator. We were losing our way a bit. We weren't sure who we were or what we should be. We were starting to get into programming drum machines and basslines, and we started losing the character of the band. But I think it worked better than the next album, *Liberty*. That one didn't work at all. There's one reason why Duran Duran had the success it had, and that's the

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Right **The band pose for a photo shoot with Frank Bauer, 2004** *Below* **John Taylor and Simon Le Bon in action in Los Angeles, September 2011**

chemistry of the five members. Take out one guy and, suddenly, it doesn't go bang any more. It's a fizzle."

90s HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE POP GAME

Out of step with the emerging early Nineties grunge scene, things looked fairly bleak for Duran Duran – now with Cuccurullo as a full-time member – as they approached what became known (due to its artwork) as '*The Wedding Album*'. EMI was being cautious, insisting on involvement with the recordings, but *Ordinary World* turned things around again. "When EMI heard that, they were happy," Taylor recalls. "That song was massive for us because it was our first hit in the Nineties. We were this band that had defined the Eighties, but everyone was over the Eighties. It was probably the most important song we've released. It was a foot into the next decade."

But, though the album provided a second hit in *Come Undone*, the band tripped themselves up with its 1995 follow-up, a covers album entitled *Thank You*. "It turned into a nightmare," Taylor admits. "We weren't agreeing on what songs we should do and what direction the arrangements should take. It got the worst reviews of our career, and ours was a career of pretty bad reviews."

NME devoted two pages to the album, but the tone matched a 2006 *Q* magazine poll where the record was voted the worst of all time, editor Gareth Grundy describing it as "abysmal on every level". The perceived absurdity of the band covering Public Enemy's *911 Is A Joke* and Elvis Costello's *Watching The Detectives* was too much for most to stomach."I think people were just ready to hang us at that point," Taylor sighs, "and the covers album was the way to hand them the noose."

With only Le Bon and Cuccurullo prepared to undertake promotional duties, the writing seemed to be on the wall. Following his divorce from his first wife, Amanda de Cadenet, as well as aborted attempts to record their next album, *Medazzaland*, Taylor quit the band. "I was trying to be a grown-up for the first time in my life," he says. "I'd had this extraordinary extended adolescence, but the shit had hit the fan. I had to shape up." By the end of 1999, the band was out of contract.

00s THE RECOGNITION OF THEIR PEERS

The 21st century got underway for Duran Duran with *Pop Trash*, which would prove their only release for their next label, Hollywood Records. The title proved prescient: the album failed even to crack the Top 20 in their homeland.

"It's never easy when a founding member leaves," Taylor says. "But there's a spirit in this band and all the founding members have got it. So Simon and Nick continued with Warren, and they did the best job they could. But then I met up with Simon and Nick in LA, and the idea of putting a reunion together came up. It was really anathema to us because it's such a Spinal Tap concept. We'd prided ourselves on our modernity – continual evolution and reinvention. So this idea of putting the band back together was a big, big nut to swallow. That's a book in itself, that reunion."

With the other two Taylors back in the fold to complete the original line-up, it took a while for things to click into place. It would prove to be a smart decision,

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"THIS IDEA OF PUTTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER [IN 2000] WAS A BIG, BIG NUT TO SWALLOW. THAT'S A BOOK IN ITSELF, THAT REUNION."

though: after a sold-out tour of the US, the band were honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by MTV in 2003, and the following year they picked up the Outstanding Contribution Award at the Brits. That year also saw the release of their comeback album, *Astronaut*…

"We went into the studio with Nile, but we kind of fell out with him," recalls Taylor. "We were trying to write songs that would redefine Duran Duran and be hit songs in the contemporary market, but also trying to rebuild relationships. It was difficult. It was the opposite of *Rio*, where we'd been living together for two years. We hadn't had one conversation for 18 years."

While *Astronaut* was, on the whole, warmly received, *Uncut* magazine described it as having "very little that's memorable". Room for improvement with their next album, then – but again, circumstances conspired against the band. Initial recordings for the album – originally called *Reportage* – failed to provide the lead single that Epic demanded, so the company requested a producer who could emphasise Duran Duran's pop elements. But even this proved to be far from plain sailing.

"We waited for six months to get in the studio with Timbaland," Taylor groans. "We got him for a week and it was the week that we fell out with Andy."

Once again, they found themselves without a guitarist. *Reportage* was scrapped – though Taylor hints that they often consider completing it – and the band pursued the direction the Timbaland sessions had inspired. They completed work with producer and Timbaland protégé Danja (aka Danjahandz), but even a collaboration with Justin Timberlake on two tracks, *Nite Runner* and *Falling Down*, couldn't quite rescue the subsequent album, retitled *Red Carpet Massacre*. The positive reviews that had accompanied *Astronaut* looked like being a one-off, with "The Second Act" – as Taylor refers to it – of the band's career already over. And yet, somehow, Duran Duran were able to plot another scene.

"We'd disconnected with the vibe," Taylor admits of *Red Carpet Massacre*. But, he points out, this made it "perfect timing for Mark Ronson to enter stage left and say, 'How about we do an album that references the first two albums?' If Mark had said that to us two years earlier, we'd have said no. But after *Red Carpet Massacre*, we'd gone so far out that we were ready to come back in."

The result was *All You Need is Now*, an album Ronson had such confidence in that he released it on his own label, Allido, in the US. It returned the band to both the British and US charts.

"Recording and writing is an intimate process," Taylor explains of the time it's taken them to find their feet again. "A lot of trust is required. Everybody's got to be open-minded. And [with *Astronaut*] we weren't any of those things. The will was there but we didn't know how to negotiate with each other. And we also had differing ideas about what the new sound should be. We weren't able to get there until *All You Need Is Now*.

"*All You Need Is Now* is a total Duran Duran album, much more so than *Astronaut*. But we didn't have Mark then. We needed a producer who wasn't only hip, slick and cool, but who totally understood the Duran Duran DNA."

10s THE BRAND KEEPS GOING

Classic Pop concludes this 2012 interview with the bassist sounding thrilled at the prospect of continuing where they left off. "Over the last 30 years, there have been a few months where I've fallen out with my passion and thought I wanted to do something else. But I love my job. I love writing material. I love to put shows together. For me, we're still growing. We spent a period of time trying to get back to what we had in the early Eighties, but we had to come to a realisation that that wasn't what it was about, and we had to find peace within ourselves. We came back and we put a reunion of the original band together, and we worked through that, and now we actually feel like we have our best work ahead of us. We don't feel like we're dragging a corpse around."

40 years since he first met Nick Rhodes – having been introduced, his autobiography reveals, by the man with whom he played his inaugural concert under the less-than-promising name John West and the Sardine Cans – John Taylor may still be struggling on a daily basis to remember which city he's in. But, against the odds, the band he co-founded and that once helped define the Eighties, is back at the top again. For most acts, one might say, to survive this long is about as easy as a nuclear war. ■

DEC 2011
Having split from Epic in 2009, the band release their 13th studio album, the Mark Ronson-produced *All You Need Is Now*, on Tape Modern and S-Curve. Released 30 years after *Planet Earth*, it peaks at No.11 in the UK chart

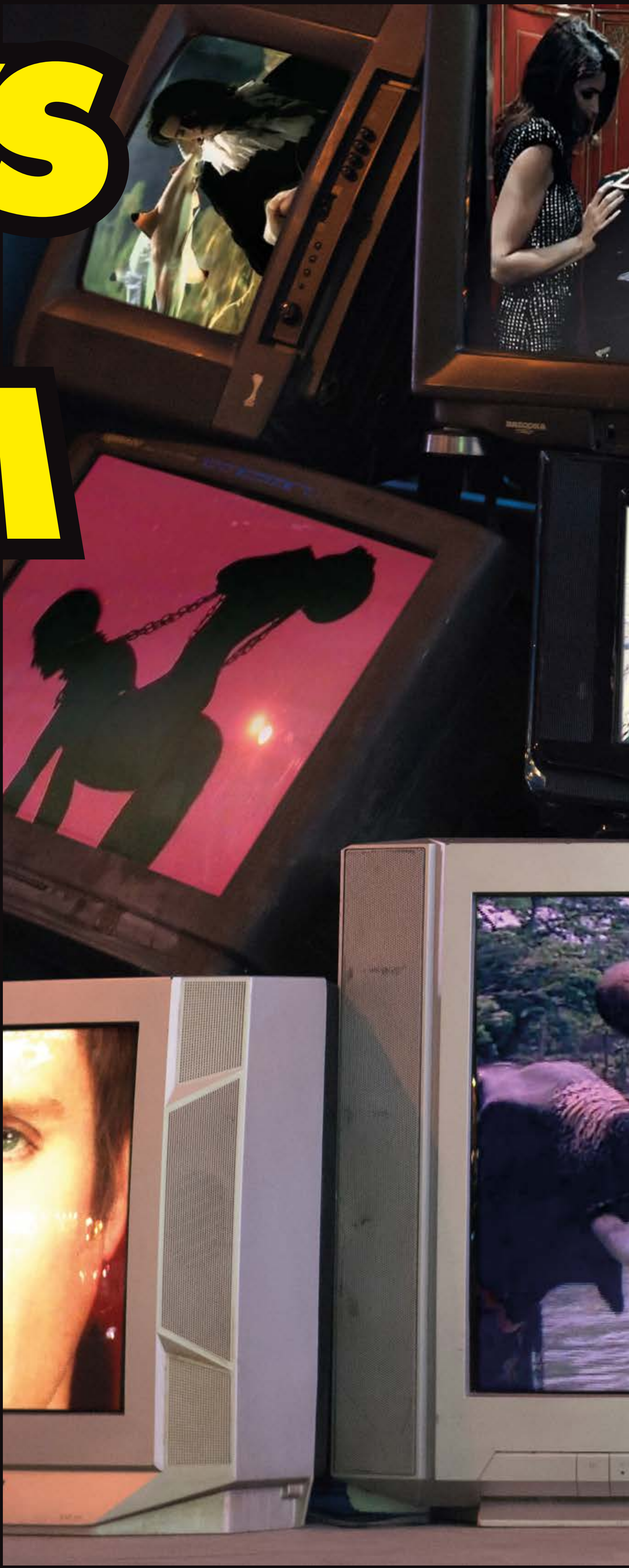
JULY 2012
The band headline an Olympics celebration concert in London's Hyde Park

AUG 2012
It's announced that Duran Duran will begin work on their 14th studio album in February 2013, with Mark Ronson once again at the helm

BOYS ON FILM

MUD WRESTLING! YACHTS! MAD MAX-STYLE DYSTOPIA! DURAN DURAN'S LEGENDARY VIDEOS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN MAKING THEM GLOBAL SUPERSTARS. WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THEIR 2D CAREER...

STEVE HARNELL



Few would argue that Duran Duran's contribution to the visual iconography of the Eighties is almost peerless. Like Michael Jackson and Madonna, they embraced the new medium of the pop video and chartered new waters with ever-more ambitious productions, from the Indiana Jones-style adventure of *Hungry Like The Wolf* to the playboy thrills of *Rio* and the post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* chaos of *The Wild Boys*.

Their matinee-idol good looks, a not inconsiderable acting ability within their ranks, a raft of nailed-on pop classics and an ambition to work with some of the most creative visual minds of their generation made for the perfect recipe. Grabbing the opportunity that the burgeoning MTV platform presented, Duran Duran effortlessly surpassed the performance video conservativeness of many of their peers to push the genre relentlessly forward. Truly, MTV and Duran Duran were a match made in satellite heaven.

Speaking to Mark Ronson in the recent BBC documentary *There's Something You Should Know*, John Taylor explains: "When we first came to New York, I remember our managers meeting with these guys that were putting MTV together and they were like 'We can't play *Stairway To Heaven* all day like we do on the radio. We need to get into new music. It would be great if you guys could give us something.'"

LOOK ALL AROUND

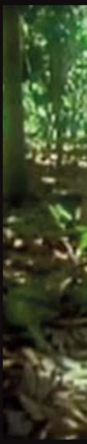
Key to the band's small screen success was director Russell Mulcahy and the soon-to-be legendary video-making team of former 10cc members Kevin

Duran Duran's spectacular video oeuvre careers through multiple genres – adventure travelogues, action flicks, high-fashion send-ups and much more besides

Right; *Planet Earth* balanced the band atop an FX-generated ice platform and contained dancing cameos from various Rum Runner club friends

Above; *Planet Earth* also played on the theme of the four elements, blending band members with images of air, fire, earth and water

A betassled cowgirl astride a devilish horse dancer… well, naturally. All this sexy surrealism made *Girls On Film* an instant cult hit



Godley and Lol Creme. Australian director Mulcahy had already made his mark with Buggles' *Video Killed The Radio Star,* but it was his collaborations with Duran Duran that cemented his legacy as one of the most important music promo directors of the Eighties. He would eventually hook up with Duran on no less than 10 occasions.

The band's video for debut single *Planet Earth* was a relatively low-key and artful studio-shot performance affair, making a major play of their New Romantic roots. Shot in Mulcahy's North West London studio, it was originally intended to cash in on the band's success in Australia, where the song was a Top 10 hit, but nobody knew what the boys looked like.

Speaking on a Duran-centric episode of the *Video Killed The Radio Star* documentary series, Simon Le Bon explained: "We knew that Russell had made a great video for [Ultravox's] *Vienna* and we were quite happy for him to give us a rough idea for [*Planet Earth*] and storyboard it."

"It was shot on video, so it was very cheap to do," added Nick Rhodes. "Afterwards, Russell was layering all these effects – he was shooting through glass with mattes on the glass. That was how they created it. We really didn't know what it was going to look like. That was the beginning for us and it crystallised with each video we made after that."

GOT YOUR PICTURE

But Duran's ambitions stretched far beyond simple performance set-ups and smash-and-grab cash-in promos. Like many bands, they made canny use of the old cliché that sex sells, and the controversial X-rated video for their third single *Girls On Film* made them stars around the world. With MTV still yet to be launched, the band targeted video jukeboxes at clubs in the States with the raunchy promo, directed by Godley & Creme. Featuring mud wrestling, pillow fights and topless models aplenty, the clip was soon banned by the BBC and elsewhere globally. The directing team made notes for the promo while on holiday, and Los Angeles mud wrestling nights and fashion shows in the South of France soon made their way into the Duran mix. Filming was undertaken on a closed set at Shepperton Studios, but after getting wind of the entertainment that was on show, onlookers did their best to get a look-in from behind curtains and doorways.

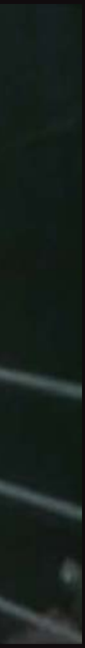
Godley explains: "I get the feeling Duran would probably have preferred it if [the video] was a bit more arty… a bit more towards style and fashion. It maybe was a bit soft porn. I think the high heels and fur coats should have gone!"

The band claim tongue-in-cheek humour was the order of the day but there's no doubt the straightforward nudity is what really made waves – intentional humour or not. A heavily-edited version of *Girls On Film* eventually made its way onto MTV, but by this time the headline-grabbing Duran were already entrenched at the vanguard of the new video-making generation. Such was the notoriety of the video that Le Bon was later to comment that the scandal overshadowed the song's message of fashion model exploitation. Godley & Creme would later employ similar shock tactics for Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *Relax* promo, earning them another ban (and assuring iconic status) in the process.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Duran then hooked up once again with Mulcahy and the stopgap release of *My Own Way.* If that was rather underwhelming, better things were to follow. Their next collaboration on *Hungry Like The Wolf* would go down in video history as one of the most impressive, ambitious and widescreen efforts to date.

With a budget of a then-whopping $200,000, EMI sent the band abroad to shoot an unforgettable *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*-style adventure. En route to an Australian tour, the band stopped off in Sri Lanka with Mulcahy in tow to essentially improvise a mini big screen adventure. Hilariously dubbed "Indiana Jones is horny and wants to get laid" by guitarist Andy Taylor, the video finds our hero Le Bon lost in the jungle with trusty bandmates on the lookout. Simon explained: "*Hungry*… was our first location video. It



Right; more *Girls On Film* action, with a lifeguard's paddling-pool rescue turning into a somewhat raunchy clinch

Left; the split-screen video for *My Own Way* toyed with matador and flamenco imagery and featured a guest spot from a parrot. Of course...

Above & right; Simon and Sheila Ming finally get down to it at the climax to *Hungry Like The Wolf*. *Vogue* model Ming also appeared in Whitney Houston's *Saving All My Love For You* promo

had a real story of me getting lost in the jungle and the other guys trying to find me. It had a cute girl in it and it had excitement – and wild animals!" Mulcahy added: "With Duran, it was a bit like being a tourist with a big camera. I had very much a cinematic vision, they had a vision with their music, and with their management it was a vision of 'Let's make this big and stand out from the rest'. We just wanted to raise the bar."

"On first glance, it looks like a guy chasing a girl – slightly uncomfortable, actually," Le Bon explained to the BBC recently. "But it's us chasing our career, trying to make it happen. We were so hungry. We would chase, we would grab and we would achieve. That's what that song is really about."

Although five days of preparation by the crew went into scouting out locations, the video was essentially made 'guerrilla' style, hastily improvised and largely done on the hoof with minimal storyboarding. Extras – including the little boy who is shown Le Bon's photograph – were non-acting members of the public recruited in Sri Lanka. Cinematic references include nods to *Apocalypse Now* as Le Bon's head rises, Martin Sheen-like, from a river, and there's a scene-stealing turn from a tiger-like woman played by Bermudian model Sheila Ming.

Mulcahy admits that the unconventional approach to filming was predicated on budget constraints. Getting involved in film-making bureaucracy and red tape would have multiplied its costs many times over. The 'Wild West' days of video-making may have cut corners, but as is often the case, necessity was the mother of invention.

> "WITH DURAN, IT WAS LIKE BEING A TOURIST WITH A BIG CAMERA. WE JUST WANTED TO RAISE THE BAR."
> **RUSSELL MULCAHY**

"THE NAME'S BON... SIMON LE BON"

THE BAND'S 007 VIDEO IS A CAMP ALL-ACTION THRILLER WITH A PUNCHLINE

For *A View To A Kill*, Duran Duran's noble entry into the canon of great Bond themes came with a tongue-in-cheek Eiffel Tower-set video featuring the band spliced into actual footage from the movie. Nick Rhodes, sporting one of the most elaborate coiffures of his entire career, looks like he spent several days in hair and make-up before the shoot. Elsewhere, the group indulge in various acts of surveillance and subterfuge and Simon blows up a helicopter in a completely unconnected part of the world via remote control. Does it make sense? No, not really. Is it a lot of fun? You bet Roger Moore's tuxedo it is.

Despite the launch of a charm offensive in later years designed to characterise their songwriting collaboration with John Barry as being wholly positive, the band's hook-up with the veteran composer wasn't without friction. Barry also had a subsequent run-in with A-ha when they worked on *The Living Daylights*. However, *A View To A Kill* was the first and only time that a Bond theme made it to No.1 in the US.

MODEL BEHAVIOUR

DURAN DURAN'S 2011 MOCKUMENTARY IS A FEAST OF HIGH-GLAMOUR ROLE REVERSAL

Proving that they're still the best-connected band amongst the fashion glitterati, *Girl Panic!*, the 2011 single from *All You Need Is Now*, makes for a superb latter-era entry in Duran Duran's video discography. At nigh-on 10 minutes in its full-length form, it manages to reunite world-renowned Eighties and Nineties supermodels for a Jonas Åkerlund-directed promo that pokes fun at the excesses of the band's pop heyday.

The assembled throng of gorgeousness play the part of Duran Duran, while the real band members knowingly camp it up as Savoy Hotel staff. Naomi Campbell leads the way as Simon, Eva Herzigova is Nick, Cindy Crawford plays John, and Helena Christensen takes the Roger role (there's even room for Yasmin Le Bon herself, who turns up as a random guitarist).

Each are interviewed in character, reflecting on their life in the music business – it's all very meta – and there are also cameos for Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana as well as the editors of *Harpers*. Cue much debauched lolling around on beds, Champagne guzzling, and even some product placement for Swarovski.

George Michael may have got there first with his *Freedom '90* video, but Duran's little black book of supermodel contacts remains absolutely impeccable.

Above; surely one of the most indelible images of the Eighties, Le Bon and company pout their way gamely through *Rio* while spoiling a set of very pricey suits

Although the video proved to be transformative for the band's fortunes worldwide – it went onto heavy four-times-daily rotation on MTV – Andy Taylor has less positive memories of the shoot… he was hospitalised with a serious stomach virus after drinking water from a lagoon.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Exotic locations, glamour, adventure and beautiful women now went hand in hand with the Duran brand, and these elements all crystallised on what has become one of the most iconic music videos of all time. Their brash, colourful promo for *Rio* perfectly encapsulated a band who were figuratively and literally riding the crest of a wave. "The yacht was such a powerful image with us," Nick later explained to the BBC. "And the coloured Antony Price suits… it really worked beautifully."

While taking a well-earned break in Antigua, the band were contacted by their management team about filming a video for their 1982 album's title track. Shot over the course of three days in May 1982, the fivesome fully played up to their international playboy reputations. *Rio* was influenced by fashion magazines of the time, with bright plastics and pinks and blues much in evidence.

"[The *Rio* video] was wild," Mulcahy recalled for the BBC. "That one we made up on the spot in the morning. I'd say 'I need a bed, I need a mirror, I want to put it on the beach'.

"The classic shot eventually ended up being Simon on the front of the boat with the boys hanging off. The cameraman was sitting at the top of the boat with no harness, handheld, hanging on [as the mast swayed from side to side]. The boys were in their tailored expensive suits getting splashed with seawater… ruining the suits, of course."

Rio actress Reema Ruspoli never flinched, even under multiple applications of paint, seawater and Champagne. She went on to marry an Italian prince.

Above; never knowingly under-cheekboned, John Taylor powers through *The Reflex*, shot in Toronto during the Sing Blue Silver tour, 1984

For all the posing, though, there's a likeable element of humour throughout the *Rio* video. Andy Taylor has his toe bitten by a crab and falls into the waves as he tries in vain to impress one of the supermodels. Le Bon falls mid-phonecall into the sea, banana skins are slipped on, and ridiculously-coloured cocktails are drunk underwater.

Simon's favourite part is the split-screen sax solo section with Nick gallantly battling with his instrument while perched precariously atop a raft, and a rather more rugged John on a mountain top – the latter footage apparently shot by a German tourist and included by Mulcahy when he realised he didn't have enough material. Other sources claim it was the Rhodes segment that used a tourist's camera when the crew ran out of film stock. Whatever the truth, Mulcahy stitched the pieces together so seamlessly that few would notice the difference. The video's love interest this time was a body-painted Reema Ruspoli – her knowing wink would seal her place as an icon of the Eighties.

Rhodes sees it as one of the band's greatest achievements: "For me, the thing that stands out in the *Rio* video more than anything else is the humour in it – it's ridiculous and slapstick. It worked with the energy of the song. A lot of the videos I liked best really had great humour in them. If we hadn't have been in Antigua it wouldn't have happened there – it could have been in Coventry!"

Below; Simon brings the post-apocalyptic angst for *The Wild Boys* shoot. It won a Video Of The Year gong at the 1985 Brit awards.

GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME

Danger, of various degrees, seemed to follow Duran around at this point. After Andy's hospitalisation on the *Hungry Like The Wolf* shoot, John and Simon escaped almost certain death when they were seen swimming only feet away from sharks as filming for the *Rio* video wrapped. A quick-witted captain managed to warn them in time before they became New Romantic shark food.

While the band's video for *The Reflex* was rather more straightforward, it still boasted an eye-catching special effect that became almost as famous as the song itself. Though it's essentially an in-concert clip, at one point a waterfall appears to fall out of the video screen onto an audience below. The basic animation now looks incredibly dated, but back then it was a state-of-the-art sensation.

Far more memorable in the long term was Duran's dystopian vision for their 12th single *The Wild Boys*. Mulcahy was once again behind the lens, and it remains one of his finest achievements. Returning to Shepperton where they shot *Girls On Film*, capturing the *Mad Max*-style fantasia was a daunting prospect. Mulcahy recalls: "I remember Tony, the Director of Photography, coming up from Miami before the shoot. He saw the set, went 'OK' [shrugs], then went behind the curtains and had three joints.

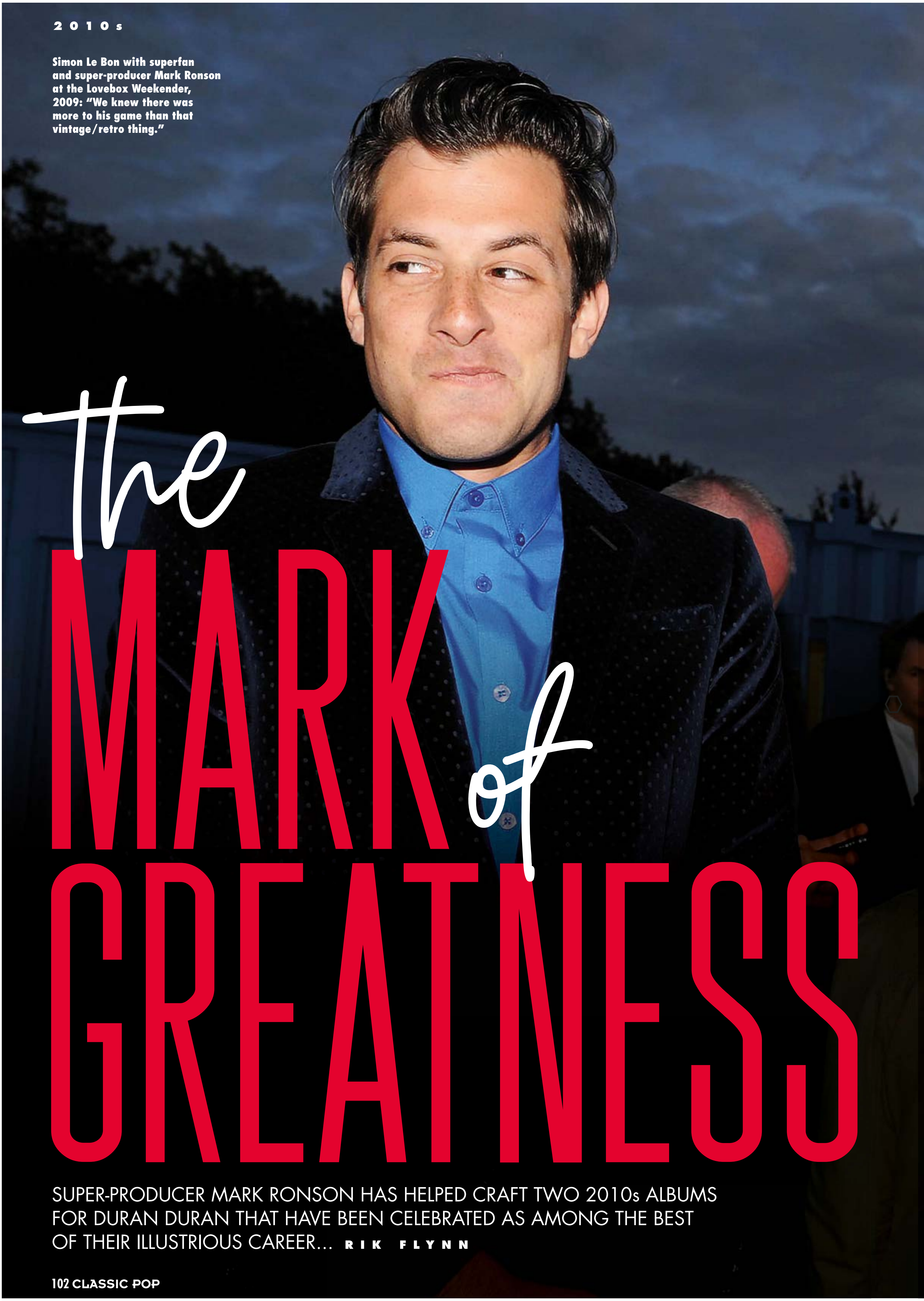
"THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT WHERE SIMON WAS STUCK UNDERWATER. THANK GOD HE'S GOT BIG LUNGS."
RUSSELL MULCAHY

"There was an unfortunate accident on the windmill sequence, where the wheel stopped and [Simon] was stuck underwater. There were no safety guys around so we all jumped in and untied him, because he was really strapped in there. Thank God he's got big lungs."

Le Bon disputes the story that his life was genuinely in danger – from an outsider's point of view it does also seem unlikely that no one was on hand to ensure his safety on the set, but the singer does admit his recollections remain somewhat hazy. "As far as I'm concerned, a kind of myth has evolved that I nearly drowned. I can't figure how that could have been… at no point did I feel frightened that my life was in danger. For many years I lived under the idea that people made it up to make the whole thing appear more interesting, more dramatic. But maybe something did happen that I was so stupidly unaware of that made it more dangerous. I was often somewhere else in those days."

Rhodes adds: "*The Wild Boys* was the pinnacle for us of the over-the-top Eighties video. After that we did *A View To A Kill*, which was shot on the Eiffel Tower, but it wasn't anywhere near that kind of budget."

In addition to their groundbreaking collaborations with Godley & Creme and Russell Mulcahy, Duran Duran also worked on videos with influential photographers Dean Chamberlain and Ellen von Unwerth, Chinese director Chen Kaige, and documentary filmmaker Julien Temple – most famous for his work with the Sex Pistols and the Polish Brothers. As Nick summarised: "Video is to us like stereo was to Pink Floyd". The greatest video-making band of all time? Few would argue with that.



Simon Le Bon with superfan and super-producer Mark Ronson at the Lovebox Weekender, 2009: "We knew there was more to his game than that vintage/retro thing."

the MARK of GREATNESS

SUPER-PRODUCER MARK RONSON HAS HELPED CRAFT TWO 2010s ALBUMS FOR DURAN DURAN THAT HAVE BEEN CELEBRATED AS AMONG THE BEST OF THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER... RIK FLYNN

© Brian Rasic/Getty Images

The world was certainly not ready for one, let alone two great albums to be made by Duran Duran in this decade… but that's exactly what they've given us. Not only did they rejuvenate their vintage sound with hotshot producer Mark Ronson their ever-willing – and ever-intuitive – conduit, but only a few years later, they raced away into the future with a second, unusually collaborative and characteristically bold triumph that took them to even higher heights. It's 2018, and Duran Duran are cool again.

Simon Le Bon was, of course, right on the money when he told *TIME* magazine: "You can't really stay around for this long and still be crap" (over 100 million record sales can't be wrong, after all) – but it's fair to say that Ronson, amongst others, played a significant role in initiating this new purple patch. When, in 2011, the Atlantic-straddling DJ-turned-producer came along to launch his "return to *Rio*" manifesto, Durannies the world over were fist-bumping under the table, no doubt delighted at the prospect of this "imaginary follow-up" to what, for many, was their favourite Duran album. But finding a fresh, younger audience in their fourth decade as a band was always going to be a big ask.

Their 13th studio album would turn out to be a stunning return to past form, and the LP that followed – made under the guidance of yet another pop sophisticate – would give them their most successful album in well over 20 years… and turn the heads of those youngsters.

ALL UP TO YOU

In January 2010, plans were afoot. Lengthy discussions took place at an initial get-together with Ronson, where tracks and ideas were reviewed. Eerily, just as the two parties aligned for their much-touted *Rio* follow-up, a different kind of restoration was also under way. Since the *Rio* single, the 70ft yacht from the video had ended up submerged in the mangroves of Antigua. Now she, too, was being reclaimed – and Eilean would soon set sail again.

With Mark Ronson at the helm, the band were to go through a similar reboot. He had helped elevate both Lily Allen (*Alright, Still*), and Amy Winehouse (*Back To Black*) with his seemingly untouchable production skills; credibility wasn't an issue. But after the *Red Carpet Massacre* project with Timbaland (and Timberlake) had misfired a few years earlier, no-one was interested in more oil-meets-water experimentation. For John Taylor that project was "a f***ing nightmare", and the critics hadn't held back. "Time for another rethink," yelled *NME*. Pitchfork called it a "wan culture grab", while *Spin* lamented "Au courant emptiness is a cardinal virtue".

Instead, Ronson gently applied the brakes to any zeitgeist-chasing desires still harboured by the band. "Mark's way of working was completely the opposite," Nick Rhodes explained to Stereogum. "It felt very much like the early days of

A bearded Simon plus Nick, John and Roger gather in 2011 at the 64th Cannes Film Festival, where Duran Duran played at a glitzy party for a vodka brand launch

POP_UP Mark Ronson's mother was a friend of the band's – hence visits by such members as John Taylor: "I would keep making excuses so I could stay up past my bedtime and meet him," said Mark.

Duran Duran, where it would just be all of us in a room slaving away for hours until it was done." The four originals were reminded that they were *already* relevant. "Mark got us to look at ourselves a bit," Roger told The Quietus. "He said: 'Everybody else is in your ground that you occupied in the early Eighties, doing your thing. You should go back and own that territory again!'"

After all, were it not for Duran Duran, The Killers and numerous bands of that ilk wouldn't exist – and Arctic Monkeys would be one joke short of a hit. "Mark wanted everything to be organic," Rhodes continued. "Everything was recorded onto tape… all analogue synths. He sat in on every session, every second of recording. We talked at great length about what the record was going to be before we ever started – and he had a vision for what he wanted things to sound like."

STAYING WITH THE MUSIC

Like most of his generation, Ronson had been a fan since he was a kid. At nine, he'd even assembled a band at school to cover *The Wild Boys* for a talent show. "I was in love with the sound of Nick Rhodes and his keyboard, because it was the sound of my youth," he told the *Sunday Telegraph*. His charmed upbringing as the son of socialites meant John Taylor had visited his home, and he'd been introduced to Simon Le Bon as a boy, yet it wasn't until he shared a bill with Duran years later in 2008 that the idea of a collaboration was floated. While Ronson's recent successes helped tip the scale, the band could see further than that… and what was initially intended as a few collaborative tracks soon turned into an entire album.

"We knew that there was more to his game than that vintage/retro thing," Le Bon told The Quietus. "We did a thing with him in Paris… where he took his favourite Duran Duran songs, made a megamix out of them, and we performed it live with him. From the songs he chose and the way he put it together – and the references outside of Duran Duran that he brought in – we knew it would work."

Never was the old adage that "you have to go there to come back" more founded in truth. Ronson – described by John Taylor as a "master forger" – insisted they work with old sounds and old synths to rediscover the band he fell for as a kid. Ronson even wrote out rules and stuck them on the studio wall to ensure safe passage for his vision. Said Ronson: "I felt like I was just a mouthpiece for 10 million Duran

© ADave M. Benett/Getty Images

Duran fans who know just what they want them to sound like." Another move that no doubt relieved tension in the camp was the decision to release the album via their own imprint, Tape Modern, having parted ways with Epic in 2009 (a similar lease of life would arrive for Pet Shop Boys when they left Parlophone a few years later). Gone, too, was what Rhodes described as the "manic pace" of previous sessions. This was to be a much more leisurely affair, and recording was spread over much of 2010.

HUMAN CHAIN

With Andy Taylor gone, stand-in guitarist Dom Brown stepped up to co-write the lion's share of the album and before long tracks such as *Being Followed, Before The Rain, Other People's Lives* and *Safe (In The Heat Of The Moment)* began to take shape. The band's EPK described the studio atmosphere. "This is essentially a live album," said Roger. "A lot of these songs were written jamming as a band." It was Ronson's job to ensure those ideas flowed. "They hadn't really played and recorded like that as a band in a room since probably the first two or three records," he explained. "It was Roger and

THE KEY RECORDINGS

HUGE HITS, LIVE CUTS AND ESSENTIAL NEW MUSIC: IT'S BEEN A GREAT DURAN DECADE

ALL YOU NEED IS NOW

2010/2011

"I realised years ago that the longer an act is around, the rarer it is that they make a seminal album late in their career," said Nick Rhodes to *Keyboard* magazine. "With *All You Need Is Now*, we were determined to defy that. On every level." Reversing the clock to *Rio* was a stroke of genius, and this Mark Ronson-produced album brought the band very much back into the frame. The old layered sound was nailed via *Being Followed* and the title track; *The Man Who Stole A Leopard* and *Leave A Light On* held up the balladry, while Le Bon's lyrical A-game shone through on *Before The Rain*. With analogue synths melded to Owen Pallett's stunning strings, it was near-perfect. Buying the full physical release – with five extra tracks – will ensure the best experience.

THE BIGGEST AND THE BEST

2012

This 34-tracker features material from the band's recorded beginnings in 1981 through to the end of the Nineties – *Rio, Seven And The Ragged Tiger, Notorious* and *Big Thing* are all well represented. All the best-loved tracks of the period are present and correct including *Planet Earth, Girls On Film, Hungry Like The Wolf, Rio, Save A Prayer* and *The Wild Boys*, plus there's lesser-spun fan favourites like B-side *Faith In Colour, Tel Aviv, New Religion, Night Boat, The Seventh Stranger, Skin Trade* and *The Chauffeur.* It's also nice to see non-album Bond single *A View To A Kill.* Our only bone of contention is the inclusion of the (inferior) single mix of *My Own Way*… the album version is far better.

A DIAMOND IN THE MIND: LIVE 2011

2014

In response to fan demand, Duran Duran succumbed and released *A Diamond In The Mind*, their first live album in over a decade. The 15-track set was recorded at Manchester Arena and features plenty of perennials including *Planet Earth, A View To A Kill, Come Undone, The Reflex, Ordinary World, Notorious* and *Rio*, as well as choice picks from *All You Need Is Now.* As well as standard releases on DVD and CD, this also got the luxury treatment. Vinyl Factory's no-expense-spared limited edition vinyl boxset featured a genuine diamond dust screen-printed gatefold. "I really wasn't sure I would get away with my request," said Nick Rhodes, "but they rose to the challenge, called their local diamond dealer, and voila!"

PAPER GODS

2015

Made with Mark Ronson, Mr Hudson, Nile Rodgers and a cast of hip young things, this marked yet another sea-change. With the four original members willing to step back from control, a new, contemporary voice emerged. Lead single *Pressure Off* – featuring Janelle Monáe's voice and Rodgers' inimitable funk guitar – announced a re-energised band with an assured hunger for special guests. Beyond Mr Hudson's weighty additions and John Frusciante and Janelle's spots came *Face For Today*, penned by Dom Brown; the beat-heavy electro of *Change The Skyline* with Mew's sublime vocalist Jonas Bjerre; and the jubilant no-tomorrows of *Last Night In The City*, with Kiesza's sky-seeking vocal.

IT'S GOT SOMETHING THAT THE EARLY DURAN DURAN RECORDS HAD – THAT VIBRANT ENERGY, A DARK HUMOUR, A KILLER CHORUS.

NICK RHODES ON ALL YOU NEED IS NOW

© Matt Kent/WireImage

Above: Nick Rhodes introduced a tale of "Chelsea mayhem" into the lyrics of *Girl Panic!*

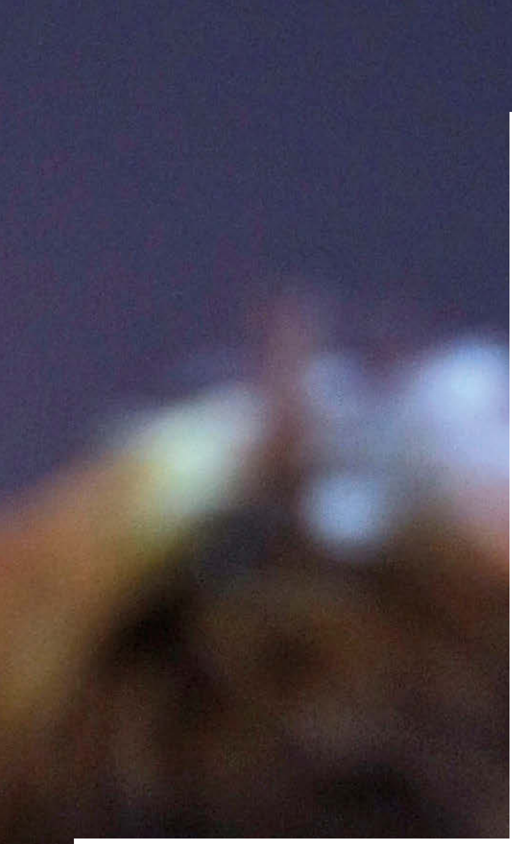
John staring at each other – bass and drums locking into a groove. Simon would have these melodies, and the chords felt great. It really felt like we were making new Duran classics." In that vein, music was often completed months before lyrics were perfected. "Someone sends the hare and we just go charging after it," added John.

The past was quite literally mined with *Brain Wrecker*, a two-year-old track that morphed into *Girl Panic!* under Ronson's suggestion that they shift the focus of the lyrics onto the opposite sex. The responsibility first fell to Simon, until his wife intervened, apparently telling him Nick's lyrics were "a lot better than [his]". Tell it like it is, Jasmin. Nick's eventual verse fashioned a tale of obsessional desire set amongst "general Chelsea mayhem".

It soon became obvious that *All You Need Is Now* was one of the album's centrepieces, its manic electronics and surging chorus augmented via subtle string arrangements from Owen Pallett. What a difference he made, and when the track was unleashed a week early as a free download – in early December 2010 – it was well received. But it wasn't all grind, and an appearance as Ronson's special guests at Lovebox Festival interrupted recording in July, with Nick and Simon assisting on a performance of Mark's own *Record Collection*, before John and Roger joined them onstage for *Planet Earth*. Simon also took time to record vocals on the (still elusive) song *C'est Lui* for French actress and singer Isabelle Adjani's duets project – a venture that also involved Bauhaus's Peter Murphy and Japan's David Sylvian.

OUT OF MY TV

Back in the studio, Nick and John were busy with another pulsing epic – and another capstone of the album – *The Man Who Stole A Leopard,* this time enlisting Kelis in vocal support. Taking inspiration from the 1968 Velvet Underground track *The Gift,* Nick wrote a fake newscast, to be read over the outro by ITN newsreader Nina Hossain, herself a huge fan of the band: "It was the best thing I've ever done, apart from having my children!" she beamed. Hossain would also sing on the Kraftwerk-referencing



Blame the Machines. *Safe (In The Heat Of The Moment)*, meanwhile, featured another high-profile personality in Scissor Sister Ana Matronic. "If Ana wasn't in Scissor Sisters then we'd have to have her in Duran Duran," purred Rhodes of their compatibility. In August, Nick took to YouTube to assure fans that the album was nearly complete.

Of the early starts, the punching rhythms and driving surf-guitar of *Being Followed* – a bitter reminder of the proliferation of state surveillance in the UK – was another standout. The whirr of Rhodes' Super-8 camera was recorded to introduce the action, intended as a nod to *Girls On Film*. "It's got something that the early Duran Duran records had that is hard to recapture," Rhodes explained. "It's that vibrant energy, a dark humour and a killer chorus. I really think that one is as representative of our sound as anything we've done in a long time." What started out – for John Taylor – as a mixture of "the Editors and Prokofiev" ended up as near to the classic sound of *Rio* as the album would get.

Before The Rain drew yet more uncanny comparisons to *Rio*. Simon had appeared in the studio one day with a poem, mirroring his original audition for the band 30 years earlier with no more than his voice and the words for *The Chauffeur* as a CV. With a military shuffle cleverly added by Roger, MkII was born. "Mark felt that this song could serve the purpose that *The Chauffeur* served on *Rio*," said John. "But then Simon wrestled it back and said: 'No, no, it's my song, and I want cello on it!'" Pallett's transformational score finished off the track – and the album – in grand style.

All You Need Is Now certainly borrowed from the old Duran Duran songbook, but it also provided a rare opportunity for the band to access their younger selves and update those raw materials. "I think when you listen to it you can really hear something that is unmistakably Duran Duran," Le Bon summarised. "It's not just my voice that tells you it's Duran Duran, it's the kind of shape of the song, the kind of chords that are being used, the way the guitar is, the keyboard presence…"

Over the months leading up to release, Ronson showed off their work – in short blasts – on his hip East Village Radio show. "I happen to think that any band who has disco hi-hats, rock guitars and sequencer keyboards owes a debt to Duran Duran," he rightfully declared.

A nine-track digital release of *All You Need Is Now* arrived in December 2010. The *New York Post* called it "a return to the brash, shiny rhythms that sold 80 million albums." *Rolling Stone* considered it "every bit the chic Riviera rock of Duran's 1980s classics", while The Huffington Post decided it was "undeniably satisfying". The album debuted in the UK charts at No.11 and made the US Top 30. What's more, the distinctly un-Christmassy *From Mediterranea With Love* (an EP showcasing the extra album track *Mediterranea*) that followed soon after as part of iTunes' '12 Days of Christmas' promotion drummed up over five million downloads.

Above: John and Simon playing *Planet Earth* alongside a synth-guitar wielding Mark Ronson at Lovebox 2010

Left: The *From Mediterranea With Love* song bundle – with live versions of *(Reach Up For The) Sunrise* and *Ordinary World* – emerged as part of iTunes' Christmas 2010 promotion

> “I THINK WHEN YOU LISTEN TO ALL YOU NEED IS NOW YOU CAN REALLY HEAR SOMETHING THAT IS UNMISTAKABLY DURAN DURAN.”
>
> SIMON LE BON

John, Simon and guitarist Dom Brown perform at The Joint inside the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino as the band tours in support of ***All You Need Is Now*** on 30 September 2011 in Las Vegas

OPENING THE CHANNELS

The supporting tour began on 3 February, when Duran Duran performed at the NFL Pepsi Super Bowl Fan Jam in Texas, partly aired on VH-1. In amongst the live shows were appearances at Battersea Power Station for The Ice & Diamonds Send-Off Ball, raising funds for injured servicemen and women, Radio 2’s ‘In Concert’ special at Shepherd’s Bush Empire, and a gig at Austin’s famous South By South West event. A further tribute – ITV’s *One Night Only Duran Duran Special* – was aired on 20 March. The following day, the physical release of *All You Need Is Now* was unleashed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of debut single *Planet Earth*, with five extra tracks.

Aside from the album’s title track soundtracking the new Dior Addict lipstick advert starring Kate Moss, Duran Duran also signed up to American Express’ ‘Unstaged’ series, a project that lined up musicians with filmmakers. Terry Gilliam did Arcade Fire, while Duran chose David Lynch (Lynch had just provided a typically stark remix of their *Girl Panic!* single). “He was up for it,” explained Rhodes. “He does sort of think in the same way that we do. Obviously, different art, different style and everything, but he does love to operate in a little vacuum without really looking at all the things going on around him.”

The ‘Unstaged’ show revealed the band’s growing penchant for collaboration. The Gossip’s Beth Ditto (*Notorious*), My Chemical Romance’s Gerard Way (*Planet Earth*), Kelis (*Come Undone*, *The Man Who Stole A Leopard)*, Ronson – and a string quartet – all appeared on stage at the Mayan Theater in LA. Old classics appeared in the 19-song set, but it was great exposure for the new record, and millions watched on YouTube when it was streamed… even if Le Bon’s joke about a goat in a blender would perhaps have been

© Michael Tran/FilmMagic

Above: Simon and Gerard Way of My Chemical Romance together at the 'Unstaged' concert at The Mayan on 23 March 2011 in Los Angeles

© Ethan Miller/Getty Images

better left in the dressing room. Amidst promotional tours in the US and Mexico, *Girl Panic!* was released in April 2011, and the band indulged their new love of festivals with a show at Coachella.

The tour rolled on into May, including a date at Cannes Film Festival, but came to an abrupt stop when Le Bon was diagnosed with laryngitis. While Simon put his feet up – and tweeted about his newfound love of reality TV show *Geordie Shore* – fans awaited the much-touted *Girl Panic!* video, set to feature supermodels Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Eva Herzigova and Helena Christensen. The tour reconvened from November with rescheduled UK dates, as well as carving paths into Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia, finishing out 2011 with a final show in Dublin at the O2. Reviews were generally positive, bar a particularly acerbic analysis from *The Telegraph*'s Neil McCormick, who maligned Duran's set at BT's Olympics Opening Ceremony Celebration Concert in Hyde Park as "cheesy hits with the bluster of imperialist warriors who refuse to acknowledge their glory days are over" (ouch). Still, this kind of thing was water off a duck's back for a band that had found its feet again. Even McCormick had to admit that *All You Need Is Now* had far superseded expectations – but the next project would unleash a different spirit altogether.

In March 2013, the band girded their loins and, with a freshly-inked contract with Warners, commenced recording with Dom Brown and Mark Ronson. *Paper Gods* would take two years to complete. "Wherever we turn our sound towards, it's got to feel natural," said John of their new

FULL SWING

DURAN ELECTRO-FY A BOWIE CLASSIC TO AID CHILDREN IN AREAS OF CONFLICT

Shortly before the release of *All You Need Is Now*, the band's fifth recorded cover of a song by their shapeshifting hero, the late, great David Bowie, was released as part of a Bowie tribute album, *We Were So Turned On*, in aid of the War Child charity. This time the band took on *Boys Keep Swinging* from Bowie's 1979 *Lodger* LP, a song clearly apt for a band that's seen its fair share of adversity. The original version's raw garage came about via the use of Eno's infamous 'Oblique Strategies' cards; on this occasion, they recommended the band "reverse roles". Perhaps wisely, Rhodes confirmed that Duran decided not to adopt the same strategy, instead laying down a fizzing piece of euphoric disco-fied electronica. The BBC called it "a disappointingly clubby, anonymous affair", but we'd argue it sits comfortably amidst their other takes on Bowie. In amongst a cast of achingly hip bands including Warpaint, Chairlift and A Place To Bury Strangers, Duran Duran certainly held up the flame as elders. The track later featured on a limited edition double A-side 7" that shared the glory with none other than French First Lady Carla Bruni, whose stripped-back take on *Absolute Beginners* sounded positively beige in comparison.

© Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic

"If Ana wasn't in Scissor Sisters then we'd have to have her in Duran Duran" – Simon and Ana Matronic shimmy through *Safe (In The Heat Of The Moment)* at Coachella 2011

© Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for Michael Kors

Smell like I sound: Simon and Dom Brown captured at a show staged for a fragrance launch in New York, 2015

undertaking, but for a group of 50-somethings, the album was ballsy to say the least. Not only would it harness a sonic palette ranging from choirs recorded in churches to cutting-edge dance loops – but unusually, it was busting its seams with collaborators.

Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist John Frusciante was first to make contact – out of the blue – and got the band to thinking. "We usually try to take care of it all ourselves," John told Jools Holland. "But that really opened our minds into letting in more talent." Frusciante would end up as featured artist on *What Are The Chances?* Ronson also suggested a rekindling of the Nile Rodgers-Duran partnership – but a return to *Notorious* this was not…

The *Paper Gods* sessions, as described by John, were "Duran Duran music in extremis". Another transformation was a fresh manifesto that embraced hip, modern company including Janelle Monáe, Kiesza and Lindsay Lohan. But it didn't end there, as fellow Brummie Mr Hudson joined in with his trap beats and modern pop-minded songwriting. "I came in for a day," chuckled Hudson. "And I think they just… forgot to order me a cab." In the end, it was Hudson's spark that coaxed out yet more, and often more daring, experimentation. By the end of that first day he'd written the epic centrepiece *You Kill Me With Silence,* and then went on to contribute to much of the album; more than half of the cuts – including the title track – were co-written by Hudson.

Duran 2.0, it seemed, was a synergetic animal that even managed to prick up the fickle ears of millennials. To prove the point, in amidst sessions, Le Bon was invited to duet with Charli XCX for *The Hunger Games* soundtrack by project curator and pop fashionista Lorde. As the jubilant first single *Pressure Off* – featuring Monáe and Rodgers – lit up the airwaves, the band made a shining appearance at Sónar Festival in Barcelona.

The album arrived in September 2015, toasted via yet another hit-filled festival headline at Bestival, a gig described by Le Bon as "the most important show of their career". And he meant it. The album made UK No.5 and No.10 in the States – their biggest LP for over two decades. From Florence to Honolulu, from London's O2 Arena… to the Ring O' Bells pub in a teeny village near Bristol called Compton Martin (where locals were treated to the greatest hits in the bar), it's no wonder that the Paper Gods tour has been almost non-stop ever since.

In October this year, Simon Le Bon turns 60. There's been talk of musicals, rumours of Glastonbury, and even hints that their 'lost' album may resurface – but through it all, one thing remains abundantly clear: Duran Duran are back on top, and they're clearly having a whole lot of fun. ■

POP_UP Feeling flush? Book now for the KAABOO festival on the Cayman Islands in February 2019, where Duran will join The Chainsmokers, Blondie, Zedd, Flo Rida, Jason Derulo and more.

FACTORY FLOORED

BOTH OF DURAN DURAN'S LATEST STUDIO ALBUMS HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED FAR BEYOND THEIR COMMON FORMATS. WITH THE HELP OF THE LEARNED EXPERTS AT VINYL FACTORY, THESE TWO BOXSETS HAVE BECOME ENVY-INDUCING WORKS OF ART…

© Rob Kim/Getty Images

Excited fans queue to meet the band at a signing session for *Paper Gods* in New York, 7 October 2015

ALL YOU NEED IS NOW BOXSET

2011

This delectable collectors' edition boxset of the 2011 album came from the ever-reliable pros at Vinyl Factory and was limited to just 500 copies (now long sold out). The box featured five specially-mastered 180g clear vinyl records, two of which contained the album, plus an LP of bonus tracks and two 12" remixes (including David Lynch's *Girl Panic!* remix). Added allure came from five exclusive sleeve designs from British artist Clunie Reid, with art direction from hip UK fashion quarterly *POP*. A black perspex box housed the whole lot, with a clear 12" 'art frame' outer face that allowed the owner to alternate the image on the front. Add an exclusive 36-page book with lyrics silver-foiled onto the black pages and a silver-mirrored paper cover, and it's a lovely thing. Each box was numbered and signed. Initially costing £250, copies now go for around £300… or even more.

PAPER GODS BOXSET

2016

It doesn't take much to draw our attention towards a decent vinyl boxset, but when we first copped an eyeful of Vinyl Factory's custom-made *Paper Gods*, our expectations were exceeded. For starters it has a magnetised 'clamshell' box with exclusive – and absolutely stunning – artwork by LA artist Alex Israel and 17 'kiss cut' magnets in four colours, plus four art cards screen-printed on high-end rainbow Mirri Board. Each of the four 12" white vinyls has its own bespoke sleeve, and each box was signed by both the band and Israel, and arrived with a numbered certificate. Beyond the clear beauty on display here, fans can enjoy the full set of the *Paper Gods* recording sessions including exclusive 'Night Version' takes of *Pressure Off* and previously unreleased track *As Seen From A Distance*. Originally priced at £300, these have also gone up in value since.

ARCHIVE INTERVIEW

STEPHEN DUFFY

"SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE WAS EASIER THAN GOING WITH THE FLOW"

STEPHEN DUFFY ZOOMED INTO DURAN DURAN'S ORBIT IN THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS AND AGAIN IN 2002 AS THE DEVILS WITH NICK RHODES – THE RESURRECTION OF THE DURAN ALBUM THAT NEVER WAS. PLOT THE TRACK OF THE HAWKS, TIN TIN, THE LILAC TIME AND HIS COLLABORATION WITH ROBBIE WILLIAMS AND YOU CAN DISCERN THE TRAJECTORY OF A SONGWRITER WHO HAS ALWAYS STUCK WITH WHAT FEELS RIGHT…

IAN PEEL

Three decades ago – on 23 June 1983, to be precise – *Smash Hits* ran its first-ever mention of Stephen Duffy. It was nothing more than a tiny news piece but it said a lot in just a few words and set the tone, and set the ball rolling, for a life in pop that has never stopped evolving. "Tin Tin, the duo which includes former Duran Duran member Stephen Duffy," it read, "release a new single this week entitled *Hold It*. They've also formed a production company called Dugro Ents for young people who 'despise traditional music biz values'. Sounds like a long way from Duran Duran..."

Duran Duran, Tin Tin, The Lilac Time, Me Me Me, The Devils, Dr Calculus... Stephen Duffy's career in forming groups is almost as illustrious as his solo work, and yet he's been off the grid since writing and touring Robbie William's *Intensive Care* album and 2009's extensive compilation, *Memory & Desire – 30 Years In The Wilderness*. "I now live in Cornwall with my family," Duffy told *Classic Pop* in 2014 "We didn't mean to… it was a spur of the moment thing. Or it could be a witness protection programme I've forgotten about."

Stephen Duffy was born in 1960, making him the same age as John Taylor. He collided with John – then, of course, Nigel – during their first year at Birmingham Art College, and Duran Duran Mk1 was promptly formed with the addition of John's old friend Nick Rhodes (two years younger than either of them) plus another friend, Simon Colley. The quartet's anti-rock-establishment ethos was obvious from their chosen instrumentation: though Taylor played guitar, Colley supplied the left-field choice of woodwind, Rhodes twiddled the knobs on a small yellow-and-black monophonic Wasp synthesiser, and Duffy, resplendent in tight leather trousers, reluctantly took over the singer's microphone while brandishing an unnecessarily difficult-to-play fretless bass, purchased – he later admitted – because he didn't know what basses were supposed to look like.

One thing Stephen Duffy did know was that his new friends seemed absolutely driven to succeed. "I had never met people with such ambition before," he informed VH1 many years later. "They wanted to be famous – I was the lead singer, shrieking in a sort of effeminate manner…"

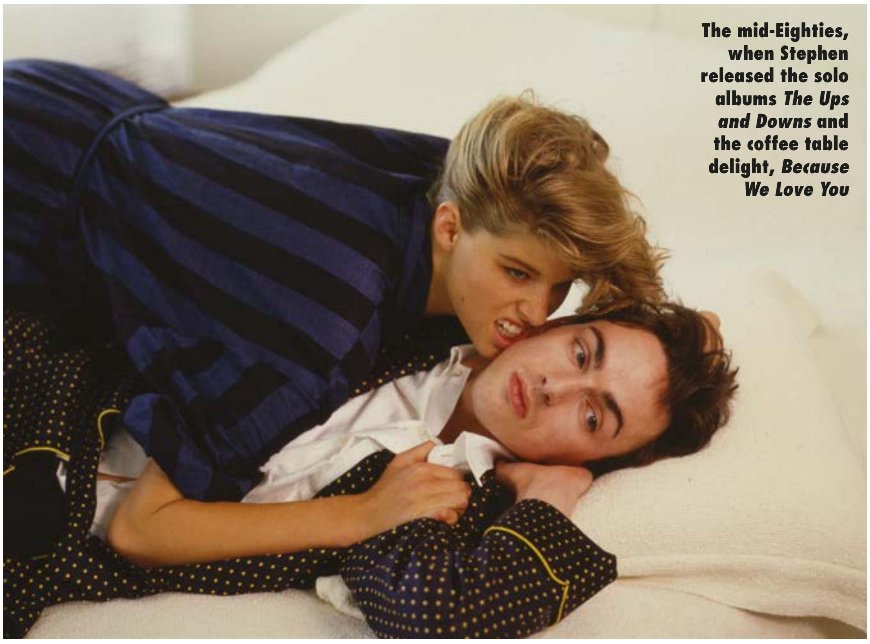
When you were at Birmingham Art College with Nick and John, had you already decided on a career in music? What else was going on at the time?

I went to the same careers office as Jeff Lynne, but about a dozen or so years later. My uncle's band Bobby Valentine And The Valets became Carl Wayne And The Vikings. Before that, my grandfather played drums in big bands in Birmingham. We all played the same venues: the Crown, the Golden Eagle. I had to leave, to go further. Sign to Sire, play at Danceteria instead.

I saw Dexys Midnight Runners before they'd decided on the donkey jacket and woolly hat look. Only one looked like that – there was also a fisherman complete with nets, a pirate, and a 19th century watercolorist. I made up the last one as I can't bring the picture into focus… it was very good, though. Kevin [Rowland] had Tannoy announcements from a railway station played between the songs. Everyone was out and about – The Beat, The Coventry Automatics who became The Specials, the UB's – but the best two who no one ever mentions were The Au Pairs and The Nightingales.

With the *Dark Circles* album in 2002 it was fascinating to hear how Duran Duran might have sounded, had history been just a little different…

All of the music we did as The Devils was the stuff that John, Nick and I got together for the first Duran shows, those three or four gigs. The newer numbers were taken from material that I made at the time that I kept editing. I'd carried this desk around for years – it had gone in and out of storage – and every time I got it out of storage I'd open the drawer and there would be this cassette: on one side there



The mid-Eighties, when Stephen released the solo albums *The Ups and Downs* and the coffee table delight, *Because We Love You*

Intentionally obscured: Stephen as the frontman of the The Lilac Time, shot here for the release of their second album, *Paradise Circus*

was a Duran rehearsal and on the other side there was the first Duran gig at Birmingham Art College. And then I just happened to be at a Vivienne Westwood event and I saw Nick for the first time in 20 or so years. I went up to him and said "Nick..." and just he looked up at me and said "Why did you leave?"

Unfortunately at that point John was sort of divorced from the group. That would have been great, if it had been the three of us who started the band. But there's still time. The 40th anniversary is coming up in 2018, so I'm keeping the year free, because obviously it's what everyone's waiting for!

The Devils was very strange because obviously we'd led such different lives, but we just slotted back – it's as if we were brothers or something. You could never imagine Nick with a pedal steel guitar, but we had such a load of fun getting that old gear together. We pretended that the last record that had come out was *Remain In Light* by Talking Heads, we pretended it was 1979. We didn't use any kind of equipment that wasn't around then.

Let's talk a little about The Lilac Time. Though it started as a DIY project, the band soon got picked up by a major label...
The strange thing with The Lilac Time was we kept on being sent to America, which was lovely, but I don't think the Americans really wanted us. Now when you look back at amazing tours in little vans with no spare guitars, no roadies, just with a driver... we went all through California, absolutely wonderful life experiences. I just wanted to carry on making records like the first one but we were encouraged to Americanise the sound towards drive-time FM radio. But we weren't really thinking about making records for commuters in cars. More like commuters on penny-farthings.

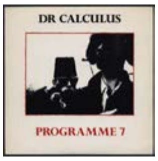
"I SAW NICK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 20 OR SO YEARS. I WENT UP TO HIM AND SAID 'NICK...' AND HE LOOKED UP AND SAID, 'WHY DID YOU LEAVE?'" STEPHEN DUFFY

1981
After playing less than a handful of gigs with Duran Duran, supplying bass and words partly lifted from the writings of F Scott Fitzgerald and Jack Kerouac, Duffy leaves to form The Hawks, his second group. They release just one single, *Words Of Hope*.

1982
Tin Tin starts out as a five-piece: Stephen, Fashiøn's John Mulligan and Dik Davis, Dexys' Stoker and producer Bob Lamb. They release *Kiss Me* via WEA but split when *Hold It* reaches No.55.

1984
Signing with Virgin imprint 10 Records, a first solo album is released – *The Ups And Downs of Stephen 'Tin Tin' Duffy* – with lead single *She Makes Me Quiver* paving the way for the No.4 remake of *Kiss Me* and the No.14 *Icing On The Cake*.

1985
Stephen makes an ecstasy album, *Designer Beatnik* by Dr Calculus mdma with Pigbag's Roger Freeman. It's a way-ahead-of-its-time mix of chillout and dance, spawning singles *Programme 7* and *Perfume From Spain*.



1986
The Ups And Downs' follow-up *Cocksure* morphs into the coffee table delights of *Because We Love You*. Duffy leaves 10 Records and heads to the hills, guitar in hand.

1988
The charts are full of acid house but Duffy's new group The Lilac Time bring their folk guitars and an undimmed ability to craft pop songs. Released independently and then via Fontana, debut album *The Lilac Time* includes the singles *Return To Yesterday* (which got to No.82) *You've Got To Love* and *Black Velvet*.

1989
Paradise Circus, a second TLT album with Stephen's brother Nick, has a more electric sound but no less of an anonymous, anti-pop presentation. The singles are *American Eyes*, *The Days Of The Week* and *The Girl Who Waves At Trains*.

1990
And Love For All is produced by XTC's Andy Partridge. The group visit the USA (where *All For Love & Love For All* is a radio hit), and play free gigs in seaside bandstands in the UK.

1991
A final twist in the tale: the band sign to Creation, who try a dance remix treatment, but the power of the songs blows the idea off course. Disbanding is near but 1991's *Astronauts*, with songs like *Grey Skies And Work Things*, has some of Duffy's best work.

1993
Now with Parlophone, Duffy returns with a solo album, *Music in Colours*, strung together with interludes by fellow Aston Villa fan Nigel Kennedy. Lead single *Natalie* is received well by critics and what initially sounds like a transient acoustic number, *Galaxy*, turns into a keeper and is generally regarded as one of his greatest songs.

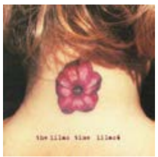
1995
Duffy returns from a period in self-imposed Alaskan exile armed with a new album of lo-fi Americana. Simply titled *Duffy*, it's picked up by the Britpop (with a capital B) movement – the musicians and the press – as evidence that he's become an elder statement of brit pop (lower case b).

1996
The result of becoming absorbed into the fleeting euphoria of Britpop is 1996's *Hanging Around* by Me Me Me, a trio of Stephen, Blur's Alex James and Elastica drummer Justin Welch. The tracks were recorded for the dark comedic Damien Hirst film, *Hanging Around*.

1998
I Love My Friends, possibly the overlooked masterpiece of all these overlooked masterpieces, sees the start of a retrospective streak: whether it's musically (*Tune In*), personally (*The Postcard*) or lyrically (*17*). One track, *Twenty Three*, is effectively a life story in song and it's this and *The Postcard* that become favourites of Robbie Williams.

1999
Looking For A Day In The Night marks the return of The Lilac Time, and the end of solo-era Stephen Duffy, or at least for now. The reconvened group includes original members Michael Giri and Nick Duffy, though now joined by pianist Claire Worrall, whom Stephen marries in 2008.

2001
Stephen distils The Lilac Time to its barest, most reflective essence for a dozen songs released under the equally, perfectly simple moniker: lilac6. A highlight is *Come Home Everyone*, which adds pedal steel guitar from Melvin Duffy (no relation) into the group's reflective sound.



2002
After meeting Nick Rhodes Stephen digs out his old Duran Duran demos and the two gather hardware from the last time they worked together, 1978, to record *Dark Circles*, the Duran album that never was (save for John Taylor's input) as The Devils.

2003
"When I was a young, young man, back in the 20th century…" muses Stephen on *So Far Away*, a highlight from The Lilac Time's seventh album *Keep Going*, released on his Folk Modern imprint along with the single *Bank Holiday Monday*.

Stephen reconvened with Duran Duran co-founder Nick Rhodes in 2002 to re-record their original 1978 demos as The Devils

2004
The No.1 single *Radio* marks the start of a collaboration with Robbie Williams. The track is included on his first *Greatest Hits* album and they go on to co-write and record all of the following album – *Intensive Care* – together. Selling eight million copies, it leads to a major world tour and Stephen hits the road as Robbie's musical director and guitarist.

2007
Runout Groove, the last Lilac Time album before marriage, fatherhood and relocation to Cornwall, appears in 2007. It's accompanied by an appearance at the Green Man Festival which is filmed for *Memory & Desire*, a documentary by Douglas Arrowsmith which traces the story of The Lilac Time. Subtitled *30 Years In The Wilderness*, *Memory & Desire* is also the title of a major retrospective compilation, the first to cover all eras of Stephen Duffy's work.

You can hear all this play out on the third Lilac Time album – 1990's *All For Love & Love For All* – with Andy Partridge producing.
At that point, XTC were very big in the States. Their *Skylarking* album was the beginning of that college rock thing. It was a bright idea, and Andy was brought in to toughen it up, but the great gift he gave us was [engineer] John Leckie, and we got on so well that he finished up the album. If only we could have carried that into the next album… only John understood what we were up to. He also had an amazing wealth of stories about Paul McCartney, The Plastic Ono Band, Simple Minds and The Fall.

How did it feel to re-enter modern pop with Robbie Williams... and how did it feel to leave again?
Going into it was easy because I'd just done The Devils, so I was using a lot of those techniques with Rob: the idea that there's no point on working on something that you then have to fix; capturing moments of exuberance when you're writing a song and you don't know where it's going. It was amazing to get back into these big old studios, like A&M, and to see the end of that era.

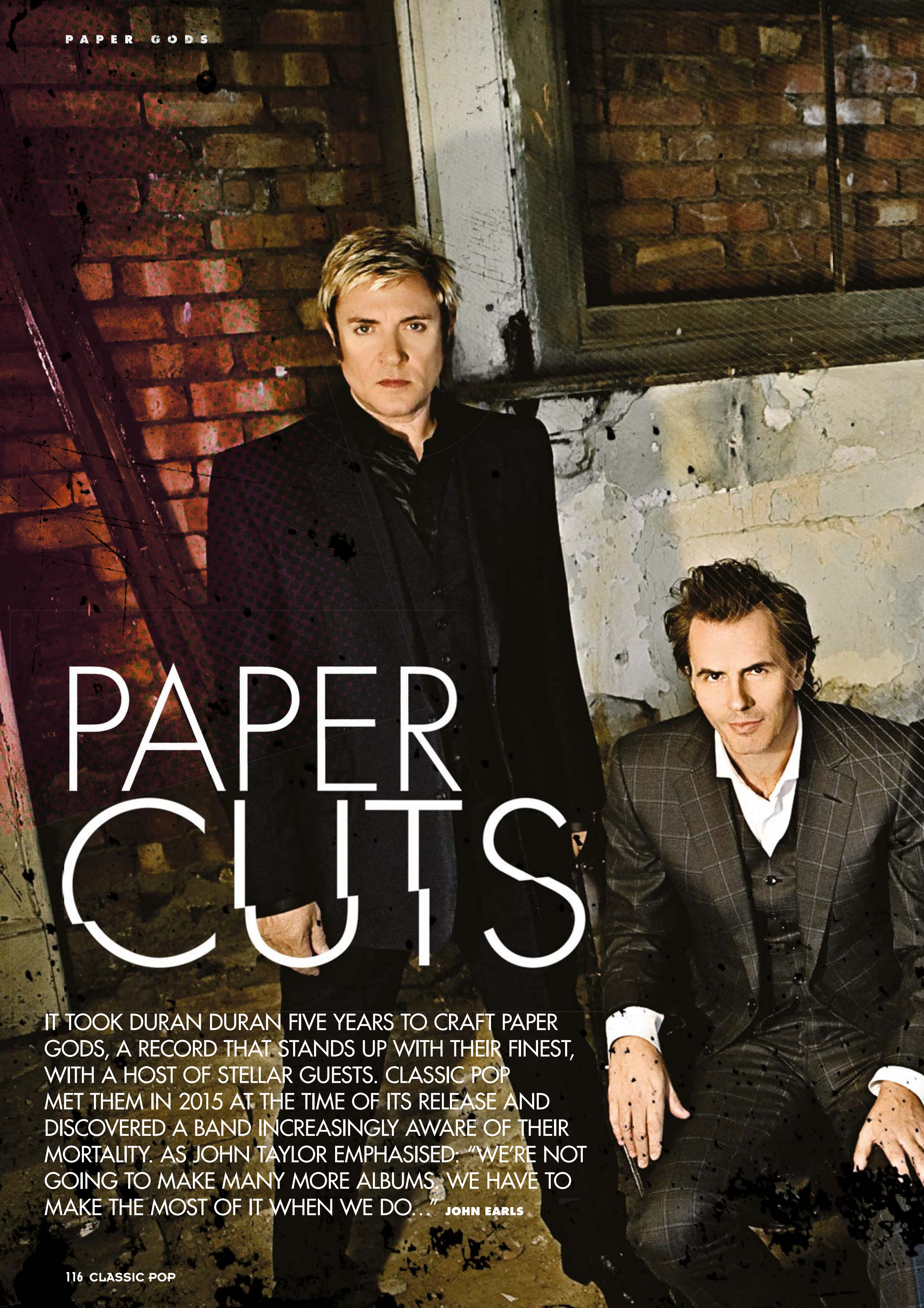
They phoned up when the record came out and said it had sold a million copies in a day, and I thought "My God, obviously I'm never going to experience this again".

Then later I thought, well, I don't think anybody will experience that again… sadly, not people like me who've come through the singer-songwriter path.

It eventually sold eight million copies or something. But when I left I went right back to being the *Kiss Me* bloke who left Duran Duran – as they say, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. It didn't fit my story, or Rob's either. It was as if it never happened.

But being part of that big machinery made me realise I had made the right decision by not being in the Durans. I was happier in a little van going around the US with no roadies in The Lilac Time. Obviously, I was a hopeless pop star – it only lasted about 15 seconds for me. I enjoyed my first seven albums – *The Ups And Downs* to *Astronauts* – but it's the eight after that which I feel closest to and the happiest with.

But I know, to most people, I made one single. And however thankful I am to that record, I'm glad I don't have to sing it every night to make a living. So that period did answer a lot of questions. I realised I had made all the right decisions: swimming against the tide was easier than going with the flow. ■



PAPER CUTS

IT TOOK DURAN DURAN FIVE YEARS TO CRAFT PAPER GODS, A RECORD THAT STANDS UP WITH THEIR FINEST, WITH A HOST OF STELLAR GUESTS. CLASSIC POP MET THEM IN 2015 AT THE TIME OF ITS RELEASE AND DISCOVERED A BAND INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THEIR MORTALITY. AS JOHN TAYLOR EMPHASISED: "WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE MANY MORE ALBUMS. WE HAVE TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT WHEN WE DO…" **JOHN EARLS**

Halfway through *Classic Pop*'s interview with three-quarters of Duran Duran at Kensington's slightly absurd Blakes Hotel (a caged budgie is next to reception), a plate of canapés arrives. With typical enthusiasm, Simon Le Bon's eyes are out on stalks. "What are those?" he burbles at the waiter of half-a-dozen small purple squares. Nick Rhodes turns to *Classic Pop* with eyebrows raised and, with a long-suffering look, he mock-sighs: "Well, that's two of them gone, whatever they are."

Duran Duran, it transpires, are much more fun than their public image might suggest. For decades, they've been painted as either vacuous buffoons who lucked into a career thanks to women screaming at clothes horse John Taylor, or they're pretentious berks who take themselves too seriously.

The reality is, Duran Duran are a hoot – or the three of them gathered over Blakes' beetroot falafels are. Le Bon and Rhodes are knowingly theatrical pantomime dames who bicker lovingly throughout, while the affable Roger Taylor is content to sit back and enjoy the spectacle. Missing these promo duties is John Taylor, who we speak to a week later by phone from his home in LA. He's friendly and attentive, but he's a marked contrast to his bandmates, intense and serious where they're laidback and playful. If Simon Le Bon relishes the gargantuan world tour that accompanies any Duran album, John Taylor would far rather return to the studio as quickly as possible.

Whatever the chemistry, it's at its peak on *Paper Gods*. Duran's fourth album since the classic line-up reunited in 2001 and their first since 2010's *All You Need Is Now*, *Paper Gods* features Mark Ronson, Nile Rodgers, John Frusciante, Janelle Monae, Kiesza and even Lindsay Lohan, though

POP_UP John Taylor bonded with album guest John Frusciante over Adam Ant. Taylor says: "I played on a song by John's wife's band, Swahili Blonde. At their home studio, I got talking to John about Adam and the Ants and left there thinking 'Wow, how do you know more about them than I do?' He's a very, very interesting guy."

producer Mr Hudson proved integral in ensuring it's Duran's best pop-with-depth album since *Rio*.

Le Bon and Roger Taylor were happy to accede to Rhodes' assertion that the album shouldn't be rushed, still fearing a repeat of 2007's messy Timbaland-produced *Red Carpet Massacre*. "We went at that album too fast, having had such a good time making *Astronaut*," recalls Roger. "Nick said we should slow everything down and take as long as it needs. The attitude was 'If we're still in the studio in three years, so what? We've got to make this the best album we've ever made.'"

Le Bon nods. "At this point, if we make anything that's at all less than our previous records, it would signal the beginning of the end," he declares. "We all felt that."

Such perfectionism is great in theory, but cabin fever proved a challenge for each of the band – John Taylor in particular. Living in LA with his wife, Juicy Couture founder Gela Nash, he was keen that Duran didn't succumb to needless tinkering in their London studio.

"It's never easy in the studio for me," he admits. "Working with Duran means I'm away from my family. Nick only has to roll across Battersea Bridge to be at work, whereas I've come a long way from LA, so I tend to be the one who's looking at the clock. I tried to stop that with this record, but that doesn't mean we don't have a sense of urgency. There comes a point where you have to say 'It's done'. I'm glad it didn't take three years."

Whereas Mark Ronson's instructions to the band on *All You Need Is Now* were to make a classic Duran Duran album "from before a time Radiohead existed", with *Paper Gods* Duran set out to create the most modern-sounding pop album they could.

"We have pretty high standards of what's good enough to go on a Duran album," smiles Rhodes. "That's subjective, of course. Some people say 'I don't think any of that rubbish should be on there.' But making records that excite us is at the centre of what we do. Making a record as modern as *Paper Gods*? I don't think there are any other artists still doing that after 35 years. I'd love to know who they are." *Classic Pop* suggests Pet Shop Boys, which gets nods of approval all round, though, Rhodes asserts: "I love Pet Shop Boys and think Neil Tennant's lyrics are up there with the very best. I think they have their own sound, though."

John Taylor takes the album's importance to Duran's career a stage further. Whenever the band is addressed, he tries to push the conversation back to their future. He states: "It's not that I feel like I'm about to die, but I'm very aware of the mortality of what Duran does. Every time we release an album now, I think 'How lucky are we?' We could easily eke out a certain type of career by just playing the oldies. But we've taken our time, we're newly signed to a major label in Warner, and I definitely feel we had to work hard on this one."

Central to *Paper Gods*' modernity are its special guests, with Lindsay Lohan supplying a startlingly effective turn on the B-52s-style giddiness of *Danceophobia*. "Simon came to us and said 'Lindsay Lohan really wants to sing on the album!' and we all went 'Er, OK…', a little doubtfully, thinking 'What could she actually do?'" explains John Taylor. "We were working on *Danceophobia* at the time, and tried to create a monologue for Lindsay, in the way Vincent Price's monologue works on *Thriller*."

Le Bon takes up the story: "Persuading Lindsay into the studio wasn't easy. She was starring in *Speed The Plow* in the West End at the time. I wouldn't say I kidnapped her, but I drove her to the studio myself eventually, having been very stern by saying 'We do this now or not at all!'" John Taylor concludes: "People that talented are never easy! It's like capturing lightning in a bottle and when she finally did come in, she gave us something great. I liked her. She's funny, sexy and very groovy."

Among the new stars, Duran were reunited with Nile Rodgers for the first time since he produced three songs on 2004's comeback album *Astronaut*. "Nile was Mark Ronson's idea," explains Rhodes. "Mark's brief to us this time was 'You should work with Nile again, and can I please do the sessions with him if you do?' We should have thought of it ourselves." Le Bon adds: "I don't think we would have thought of Nile without Mark. We didn't consciously rule him out, but I think we felt we'd done our thing with Nile for this decade on *Astronaut*."

"AT THIS POINT IN OUR CAREER, IF WE MAKE ANYTHING THAT'S AT ALL LESS THAN OUR PREVIOUS RECORDS, IT WOULD SIGNAL THE BEGINNING OF THE END. WE ALL FELT THAT."

With Ronson busy on his own album *Uptown Special*, it was left to his engineer Josh Blair and Ben 'Mr Hudson' McIldowie to get the album into shape. "We thought Ben would only be with us for one day, but we kidnapped him for several months," laughs Rhodes. "He'd offered his services through our manager, who told us 'He's worked with Kanye West and Jay-Z and, oh, by the way, he's from Birmingham, too.' That naturally got our interest! By the time Ben came in, we'd been working for a year and had become very self-analytical. We're invariably over-analytical at times, so Ben was a breath of fresh air to stop us being overly obsessive."

McIldowie renewed Duran's confidence by cajoling Le Bon to take control of lyrics again, having partially ceded writing words to Rhodes on *All You Need Is Now*.

John Taylor: "I'm very aware of the mortality of what Duran does. Every time I think, 'How lucky are we?'"
© Getty Images

"Ben and I did a lot of stuff together," says Le Bon. "The lyrics felt much less stressful this time, and I didn't hit the dry patches I had on the last album. There was always something coming. Nick suggests song titles for me to base lyrics around – he's great at throwing potential titles at me, though the results might not be what he thought the title should be about." Rhodes smiles, adding: "If Simon has an idea for lyrics, it's usually worthwhile. He's more direct than the ideas the rest of us come up with."

Le Bon's lyrics are especially direct on *Paper Gods*' title track, a polemic against sweatshops and western imperialism. Along with the hymnal quality of Rhodes' keyboards, it harks back to the days when Duran were more of an art school project than a global pop factory.

"The scale of our success maybe felt like an accident," admits Roger Taylor. "We thought we were operating in the sphere of Simple Minds and Japan, and suddenly we were confronted by screaming teenagers." But Duran's music is unisex, appealing to women as much as men. "That's true, but it took us a while to admit that," Le Bon concedes. "We had our noses absolutely rubbed in it that Duran was 'music for girls'. But there's something in our music that speaks of compassion, which insecure teenagers do need. I think our teenage audience picked up on that. A lot of bands at the time excluded women, by trying to be a lads' band." Rhodes picks up the thread: "We're not frightened of our fragility and sensitivity, which a lot of rock artists are. They don't want to show that side, whereas we're very open, and that attracts people in a different way."

Whatever the reasons for Duran's appeal, for most of the Eighties they were the biggest band on the planet. "It felt out of control on a nightly basis," says Rhodes. "It's still like that in Italy! It's quite bizarre when you're a prisoner of your own world."

He believes that going to Paris to record 1988's *Big Thing* was key to regaining their sanity, as "In typical French style, nobody in Paris gave a damn we were there. We were able to find our balance again."

At least Duran were megastars in a time before social media and gossip websites like TMZ… "Oh God, yes," shudders Le Bon. "I don't even want to think about trying to be that famous now."

Rhodes recalls attending a charity dinner with Justin Bieber on the same table. "I felt so bad for Justin," he sighs. "All night, no-one would leave him alone, even when he was eating. He was actually very nice. The big difference between then and now is that everyone coming up to Justin had a phone, wanting a picture – guys who were 50 or 60, who should have known better, demanding a selfie for their god-daughter. I thought 'Let the poor guy eat!' I'm happy we didn't have to go through that period of constant communication."

There are still plenty of Durannies out there, of course, and Le Bon discusses a fan who asks for a photo – "never an autograph" – outside the band's studio every day. "We call it The Daily Selfie and she must have 84 million photos of us by now," he shrugs. "Selfies are the new autograph. I don't mind an autograph… they're much quicker to do and feel less intrusive. But people freak out when you say 'no' to a selfie. I won't do them if I'm eating, partly because if that photo ends up on social media, everyone goes 'Ooh, look! No wonder Simon Le Bon could lose some weight!'"

Paper Gods is Duran Duran's 14th studio album, and opinions of their status causes the one serious note of tension during the interview. Le Bon: "People are treating us in a different way lately. That's a bit scary, as I'm used to being dismissed and disregarded. Even Paul Morley is being kind! We headlined a show at Hyde Park for

POP_UP The band are open to working with Warren Cuccurullo, their guitarist from 1986-2001. Nick Rhodes says: "I'd love to play with Warren again one day. He's an extraordinary guitarist, and what he brought was so special. Our rebirth with *Come Undone* and *Ordinary World* was largely down to him."

"THE QUESTION WE ASKED MOST WAS 'CAN WE GET AWAY WITH THAT?' THERE HAS TO BE A DEGREE OF FAMILIARITY, BUT YOU NEED NEW ASPECTS, TOO."

the Olympic Games in 2012 and Tony Parsons said we should never be allowed to represent England. But Morley then wrote: 'You know what? I'm not a fan, but I've got to admit to a grudging respect for their ability to survive.' That meant a lot to me." At this Rhodes looks horrified, sitting bolt upright and spluttering: "What? Why?!" Le Bon patiently explains: "No, come on, Paul Morley has some good ideas. It meant a lot to me that he'd changed to that extent. That's about as good as it'll get from him, and that's alright for me." Rhodes raises his eyebrows, but goes back to good-natured teasing: "Wow! Well, so long as you're happy. At the other end of the scale, my 21-year-old son told me recently 'Dad, did you know that Duran Duran have got really cool? My friends have got your music all over their iPhones.'" Roger Taylor grumbles: "Yeah, but I bet they haven't paid for it…"

Paper Gods is Duran's first album since signing to Warner in a deal which reunites the band with their back catalogue. With Duran leaving EMI in 1999, Warner bought EMI from equity group Terra Firma in 2013. Does this mean a reissue campaign can begin after the new album's tour?

"I hope so," says Rhodes. "We're very keen to protect our back catalogue properly and treat it in the way it deserves to be. It hasn't exactly been on, ah, terra firma recently. Being back with Warner was an enormous part of the appeal of signing to them."

"We had a lot of very dodgy offers put our way by EMI," Le Bon tuts. "We've managed to put the kybosh on the truly awful ones, mainly usage in commercials. Why does every junk food company in the world think *Hungry Like The Wolf* is a good idea?"

There are many unreleased Duran songs that have circulated on bootlegs for years. "We'd be delighted to properly finish a few of those," says Rhodes. "We're aware of the world of obscurity, and I'm all for it, so long as it's done properly." He, Le Bon and Roger Taylor are particularly keen to release *Reportage*, the album Duran were working on when Andy Taylor quit for the second time, in 2006. "It would need mixing, but every song bar one or two on *Reportage* is finished," Rhodes points out. "I wouldn't want to change it hugely, because it should remain as it was when we did it. There'd be legal issues with Andy agreeing to its release, of course, but I think he'd want it released if we could agree on the mixing. He plays some amazing work on those songs."

John Taylor is less concerned about seeing any reissues come to fruition. "If you have the energy to generate new music, you should always go with that," he says. "Any one member of Duran could dust off those unfinished and unreleased songs with an engineer. I don't need to sit there for lengthy periods of time bringing unfinished Eighties songs to closure. Ultimately, those reissues could happen after I'm dead!"

John reveals that he and Rhodes are trying to write a musical, which they may continue working on during the Paper Gods tour. He sounds pained when *Classic Pop* jokingly asks if it'll be a musical based on Duran's catalogue, like *Mamma Mia!* or *We Will Rock You*. "Definitely not!" he replies. "It's a story Nick and I have written on a subject close to our hearts. It's the first time we've written anything to a story, and it's very much a labour of love. We've worked on it for a couple of years during gaps in our schedule. I'd be open to turning that into a full Duran musical but, depending on how this album is received, I'd like to see us start a new album again."

It feels redundant to ask whether John would be ever be interested in playing an entire vintage Duran album in full in concert, even though his bandmates seem to be fascinated at the idea. "I'm sure it's something that'll happen sooner or later," says Le Bon, adding: "Maybe we could play all of our albums at a two-week residency, one a night, like Sparks did." Roger Taylor would prefer to

POP_UP Duran are interested in writing songs for other artists. Nick Rhodes: "If people are interested, we'd be interested. David Bowie wrote a song for Peter Noone, after all. And let's be clear, Bowie also wrote one for Mott The Hoople which was pretty damned good."

GOD'S GIFTS: DURAN DURAN'S TRACK-BY-TRACK GUIDE TO PAPER GODS

PAPER GODS
(FEAT. MR HUDSON)
Simon Le Bon: "I came to the studio one morning and Ben said: 'We did this great thing last night.' My first reaction was 'Nah, don't like it, it's rubbish.' Then I went to the loo and suddenly the melody that goes over *Paper Gods'* chorus popped into my head. And I had to admit 'Oh, OK, I think I've got something…' Once you discover the bud of a song, the whole thing opens up like a flower."

LAST NIGHT IN THE CITY
(FEAT. KIESZA)
Nick Rhodes: "We'd talked about having a female voice on the song, but we didn't know who. Kiesza was recommended by our publisher, and her fantastic energy took the song to a different level. You can't do features just for the hell of it. You want someone that raises the standard of the song."
Simon Le Bon: "Or the whole record, which Kiesza did with her contribution."

YOU KILL ME WITH SILENCE
Nick Rhodes: "This is the first song we worked on with Ben. He started playing with a beat, and we all joined in with parts to see what we could make. We pretty much had the whole song done on the first day of working with him. He became accepted to us within an hour, and that was so valuable, as suddenly there's someone else in the room who we trusted. He's very funny, too, which works well with us."

PRESSURE OFF
(FEAT. JANELLE MONAE AND NILE RODGERS)
John Taylor: "We went to Mark Ronson's studio last August for three days, and Nile was there in between Chic shows. *Pressure Off* was the song we'd been looking for, because it had the potential to be the first single. At that stage, we'd had songs that spoke of the concept of the album and its overall arc, but I don't think we had one we could go to radio with. Suddenly, we realised 'If we work hard, maybe this is it. This one is important for the album.'"

FACE FOR TODAY
John Taylor: "A great song title. Simon's moulding words while we mould sounds. He'll usually come up with a dozen ideas for lyrics and we'll go '*Paper Gods*? Great title!' Simon then says 'Really? Oh, OK' and runs with that. It's rare for him to say 'These are the lyrics and the song is called this.' More often, one of us picks up on something and says to Simon 'That's a great phrase, can we move more down that road?'"

DANCEOPHOBIA
(FEAT. LINDSAY LOHAN)
John Taylor: "We were obsessed by The Time, and loved the idea of having a slightly comedic Minneapolis dance track. But we shied away from the complexity

"pick an album and play that for a few shows," whereas Rhodes votes for either playing Duran's first three albums in one show, or playing all of *Paper Gods* followed by *Rio*.

It's easy to see how those minor differences of approach can become magnified in the middle of *Paper Gods'* lengthy recording, summarised by John Taylor as he explains how *Last Night In The City* became especially fractious. "At one point, it had a house music piano motif, like Coldplay's *A Sky Full Of Stars*," he recalls. "That led to an argument over whether having a house piano is really something Duran would do. There was a lot of back-and-forth over that, and it wasn't even about whether the piano sounded good in the first place. Then Nick edited a version on the quiet, which dropped the piano. I listened to it with our publisher and we were both really excited by it, until I slowly realised 'Hang on, where's that piano I loved?' There are thousands of those kind of decisions on every album, and so many of them don't really matter." He pauses, and bursts out laughing. "I realise we must sound like a right bunch of losers!"

Losers or not, house piano or not, Duran must stay with the times. Or, as John Taylor puts it: "The question we asked most on this album was 'Can we get away with that? Is it dignified, or is it mutton?' We want to listen to a Kendrick Lamar song and say 'I love that hi-hat pattern. Could we use that?' A new Duran album is like redesigning the BMW 3 Series: there has to be a degree of familiarity, but you need entirely new aspects, too."

It's an attitude that has paid off on *Paper Gods*. Whatever happens next, Duran Duran's latest album stands tall with their best. John Taylor: "Maybe it's my age, but I listened back to a lot of this album thinking 'If this is the last note on the last Duran Duran album, would I be happy?' And I definitely think that, yes, I would."

Nick Rhodes: "*The Universe Alone* is our *My Way*, saying you can't rely on anything or anyone."
© Getty Images

of that sound with its horns and tricky fills, so we smoothed it out. It now reminds me of early Daft Punk, their French feel. Nick and I had a boner for the song all along, and once Simon came up with the title, we all went 'That's it!' The album itself was nearly called *Danceophobia*."

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?
(FEAT. JOHN FRUSCIANTE)
John Taylor: "The closest the album has to a Duran Duran power ballad! It's the first song we sent to John, and he took quite a while to send anything back, but when he did we were knocked out and said 'Brilliant! What shall we ask him to do next?' John told me he'd been practicing certain styles that would fit in Duran's sound."

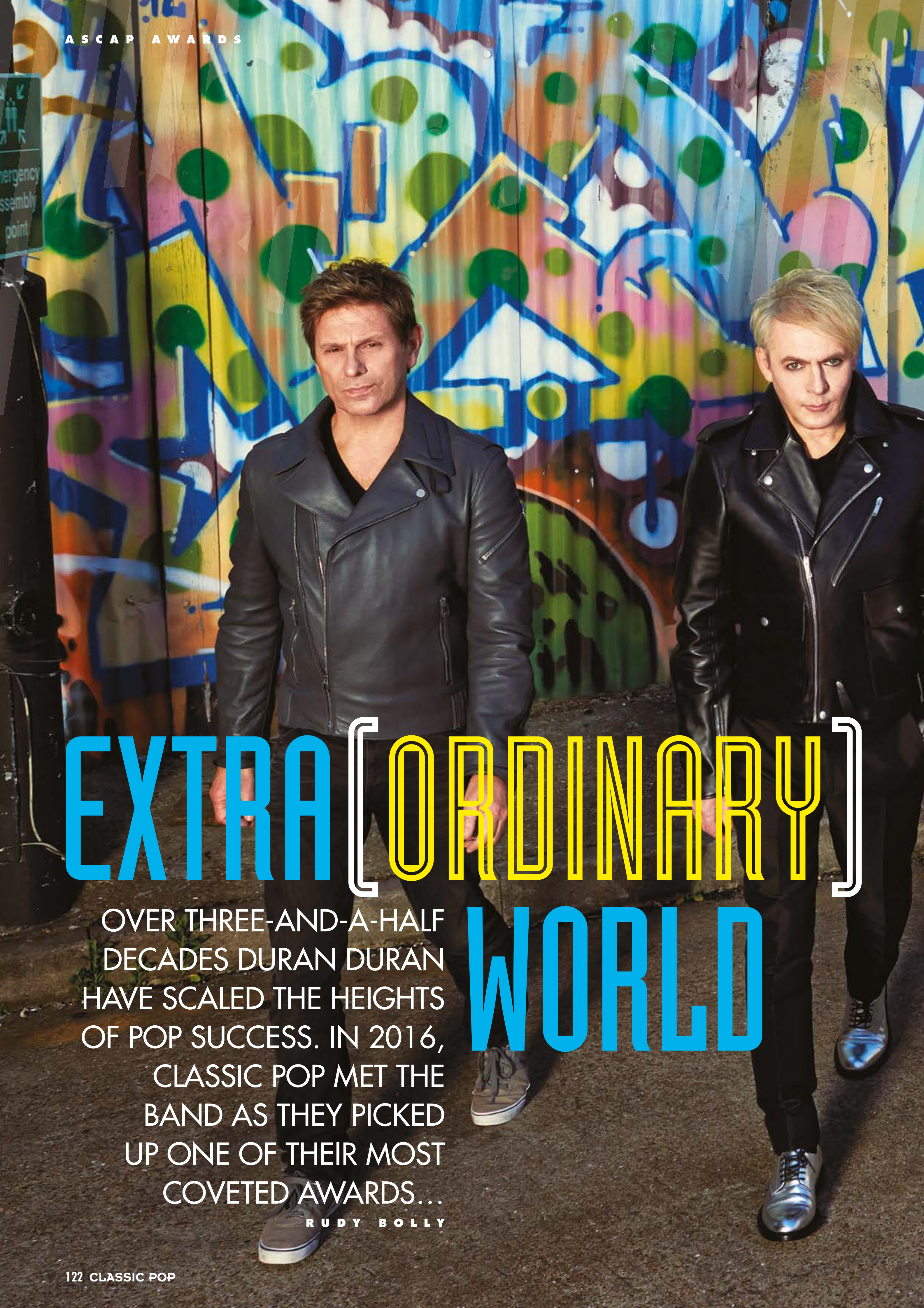
SUNSET GARAGE
Roger Taylor: "We nearly dumped this, but the A&R from Warner said 'That's amazing! This could be one of the singles for the UK.' So we thought we'd better make sure it could fit the rest of the album. We'd become so close to the album that we couldn't quite see the validity of *Sunset Garage*. We're all for diversity, but you don't want an album that goes from folk music to acid house."

CHANGE THE SKYLINE
(FEAT. JONAS BJERRE)
Nick Rhodes: "Brandon Flowers initially wrote this one with us, but he only had time to do a rough vocal. He was great and did a fab job – but the timing of his own album *The Desired Effect* meant it didn't work out."
Simon Le Bon: "We're a big reference on Brandon's music, but he has a soft, wavery, shaky voice while I've a very strong, powerful voice, and the two worked really, really well together."

BUTTERFLY GIRL
(FEAT. JOHN FRUSCIANTE)
Simon Le Bon: "Roger's drumming is so good here. He brought in an electronic drum kit on some songs, which makes it sound like a dance track. You can always tell it's Roger, though. The songs need that personality."
Roger Taylor: "But we're not afraid to go down different avenues. We're not in a box that a lot of bands put themselves into, where they tend to find a sound and stick to it."

ONLY IN DREAMS
(FEAT. NILE RODGERS)
Nick Rhodes: "We came up with a fabulous groove and great sounds in the studio with Mark Ronson and Nile. *Only In Dreams* is from an infectious 10-minute jam that John and I played with Nile, knowing it was magical. But we had to turn what we'd got into actual songs, which is one reason everything took a while on this album."

THE UNIVERSE ALONE
(FEAT. JOHN FRUSCIANTE)
John Taylor: "We thought *The Universe Alone* might open the album. It needed to go somewhere on the album that gives it some weight. It's our *My Way*, to an extent, saying that you can't rely on anything or anyone. Simon is a sailor and he just isn't afraid by life. In this song, his chest is puffed out on the prow of the boat, but it's a starship rather than a yacht. There's something courageous about this one."



EXTRA[ORDINARY] WORLD

OVER THREE-AND-A-HALF DECADES DURAN DURAN HAVE SCALED THE HEIGHTS OF POP SUCCESS. IN 2016, CLASSIC POP MET THE BAND AS THEY PICKED UP ONE OF THEIR MOST COVETED AWARDS…

RUDY BOLLY

© Stephanie Pistel

After almost four decades and a tonne of eyeliner, Duran Duran are finally receiving the accolades their music deserves. It's not always been a smooth ride, and the Brummie New Romantics are first to admit they have divided popular opinion over the years. "We're not a band that people say, 'Oh, I like them'," says Simon Le Bon. "It's normally, 'I love them' or 'I hate them'."

Nevertheless, in recent times Duran Duran have been garnished with more Outstanding Achievement-type awards than John Taylor owns Most Fanciable Male prizes (seven courtesy of *Smash Hits* alone, incidentally). On 10 November 2016, the band collected the prestigious ASCAP Golden Note Award for their songwriting, an honour that perhaps means more than all those other statuettes combined. *Classic Pop* caught up with Simon Le Bon and Nick Rhodes at the intimate London ceremony to reflect on the band's situation – past, present and future.

"It's not just 'another award'. We've had an amazing year," a reliably self-assured Le Bon says. "We've released our most successful album of the last 23 years, we've done 50 dates in North America, completed one of the best tours we've ever had in the UK, played European dates and festivals… we even played to 70,000 people in Quebec. So this sort of thing is like a cherry on top of the ice cream."

The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers looks after thousands of songwriters and performers, but the Golden Note Award is only

bestowed on those who have achieved extraordinary career milestones, and so it is that Duran Duran now rub shoulders with the likes of Lionel Richie, Elton John, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Tom Petty, Jay-Z, the late George Michael, Stevie Wonder and Quincy Jones. Mildly thrilled, Nick Rhodes adds: "Getting an award for songwriting is probably the best thing we can get. It's always nice to receive an award, somebody saying well done… but a prize for songwriting is very special.

"When we make albums we strive to make every song as good as it can be, and you don't want every song to be a single anyway, you want dark and shade and light in an album; you want it to be a journey. I think each one of the songs we've written means a lot to us, some of them a lot more than the ones that have become hits."

Duran Duran's stats are undeniably impressive – 14 UK Top 10 hits, 21 Billboard Hot 100 entries in the US and well over 100 million record sales globally. They are the quintessential pop stars whose legend, despite a few lean periods, conjures up glamour, sophistication and, frankly, a darn good time. "We've achieved a status simply by being around and putting decent music out, we don't just put crap out," muses Simon. "We put the time in and we stuck together. We are more interested in making music than being famous, we like each other so clearly we are not contrived. There must be some kind of value to us, as people still listen to us."

Much more than a hits jukebox, Duran Duran have left an indelible mark on popular culture. It's hard to imagine many of today's pop acts being afforded the luxury of time to mimic Duran's achievements…

"It's a symptom of the times we live in. Things move quicker now," Nick offers. "I like mythology. We grew up in the Seventies only ever seeing occasional photos of Bowie, Marc Bolan, Roxy Music or whoever. There used to be a real mystique to pop music and an anticipation of records. Now I think people just expect a conveyor belt of artists making stuff. Even movies – there's so many premieres at Leicester Square, it's just not special every day."

POP_UP Duran Duran's awards collection includes two Brits, two Grammys, two Ivor Novellos and two MTV Video Awards. They're missing an American Music Award – but they have been nominated.

"THERE USED TO BE A REAL MYSTIQUE TO POP MUSIC, AN ANTICIPATION." NICK RHODES

Duran Duran in 2016: "We have had an amazing year"

© Stephanie Pistel

Simon agrees: "The banality of people's lives have become so much more entertaining and part of the entertainment itself. Buying a pint of milk from the local shop is newsworthy now."

Nick continues: "The proliferation of mobile phones, the internet, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, all that stuff is consumed in massive bulk every single day. It's quite hard for people to find a way through that. It's a needle in a haystack thing. And, of course, the artists who have made it through like the Kardashians, One Direction, Taylor Swift – who incidentally has got something special – those concentrated brands smash everything else to pieces because that's what everybody obsesses over.

"I think that the internet has made it easier for those few who rise to the top. But in some ways it's harder, because there's not the flow of new acts that there used to be. Other artists don't stand a chance of being heard in the same way."

One contemporary artist they do admire is Kanye West, whose compulsion for art and fashion puts him in a similarly pop universe to Duran. "I've met him a few times and I like the way he thinks," reveals Nick. "There's a mutual respect there, he does interesting things and he cares about his output."

Just like West, Duran have weathered a few storms in their career, but these days they are in grave danger of becoming established national treasures. "I'm not surprised, now, by our longevity," reflects Simon. "But the '1982 me' would have been very surprised. I think that guy expected to be drinking cocktails now on a beach."

In 2018, Duran Duran reach another major milestone – their 40th anniversary. Will they be toasting it with cocktails? "No," Simon snaps mischievously. "We're not going to celebrate it, we're not going to release an album, we're not going to go on tour. We're going to go home and watch whatever political re-runs are on TV." Nick provides a little more substance: "I hope we can do something."

Teasing aside, there are a few more concrete projects in the pipeline. Back in 2015, Nick Rhodes revealed to *Classic Pop* that he and bassist John Taylor were working on a stage show, of sorts. "John and I have been writing a musical on and off over the past four years now," says Nick. "It's not a pastiche of Duran's music, it's all original. So that's close to completion and we're getting near to a finished first draft, I think. But 'Duran the musical'? We haven't really got into that zone yet. We keep getting approached by people, but..."

You can understand his trepidation. Musicals have become lucrative pension pots for so many acts, but they aren't always worthy of the catalogue. Even David Bowie wasn't immune from bad reviews when his stage show *Lazarus* opened in London.

Nick agrees: "I saw *Lazarus*, it was great to be there because it was the last thing that David Bowie did. Everybody there had that incredible warmth for him and, of course, we all wanted it to be amazing, and there were things about it that were really good; but I couldn't help thinking had he been around a little longer he would have tweaked it a bit more and it would have been even better."

Duran owe a debt to Bowie in so many ways. Now they have had time to digest his death, how do they reflect on Bowie's influence?

Duran Duran at the ASCAP London Music Awards: "It's a thrill to be honoured"

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT

It's not all been good news for Duran Duran in recent times, as in December 2016 the band lost a legal battle at London's High Court over the American rights to some of their most famous songs – though they later won the right to appeal against the ruling.

The five original members – former guitarist Andy Taylor included – wanted to terminate an agreement with publishers Gloucester Place Music, owned by Sony/ATV. Under US law, after 35 years songwriters have "an inalienable right" to call for a reversion of copyright. However, lawyers for Gloucester Place, part of EMI Music Publishing, argued that Duran Duran had breached music publishing agreements because they are governed by English laws of contract which prevent change.

After a judge sided with Gloucester Place, Nick Rhodes said: "We signed a publishing agreement as unsuspecting teenagers, over three decades ago, when just starting out and when we knew no better.

"Today we are told the language in that agreement allows our long-time publishers, Sony/ATV, to override our statutory rights under US law.

"This gives wealthy publishing companies carte blanche to take advantage of the songwriters who built their fortune over many years, and strips songwriters of their right to rebalance this reward.

"If left untested, this judgment sets a very bad precedent for all songwriters of our era."

The copyright relates to Duran's first three studio albums alongside their James Bond soundtrack hit, *A View To A Kill*. Simon Le Bon has confirmed that the case had "left a bitter taste". "I know that other artists in similar positions will be as outraged and saddened as we are," he said.

POP_UP The final video release from *Paper Gods* was *Last Night In The City* feat. Kiesza, directed by Nick Egan (who's helmed four Duran vids before) and Icelandic-born, LA-based duo the Snorri Brothers.

John Taylor: a special track made with Roger Taylor and young adults debuted in November 2016

A ROAD TO RECOVERY

In November 2016, John Taylor and drummer Roger Taylor released a charity song with young people battling addiction. John, who documented his own struggles with substance abuse in his book *In The Pleasure Groove*, worked on the project with Roger over a nine-month period during the *Paper Gods* tour. The track, *No Rewind*, was created in collaboration with RecoveryTrax – a programme by America's Road Recovery charity that offers professional mentoring to youth through creative workshops, live concerts and recording projects – and was offered alongside a special fundraising range of Paper Gods tour and album memorabilia, plus such prizes as a signed drum skin and a personal meet-and-greet with the band.

The song was recorded with producer Joshua Blair at New York City's Threshold Recording Studio. "Road Recovery offers a safe, drug- and alcohol-free place for young people to learn and work, and with professional guidance, introduces them to all aspects of the music business – from songwriting and performance, to the delivery of their music to fans, either live or via recordings," John Taylor explained at the time. "The track *No Rewind* itself says a lot about Road Recovery's work and philosophy. Lyrically and thematically, it's an expression of the real concerns of sober kids."

"If there's one person who draws every member of Duran Duran together, it's him," confirms Simon, who possesses the extra insight of knowing what it's like to perform Bowie's *Fame* and *Boys Keep Swinging*. "When I was 14 all of my exercise books had him all over them."

Nick nods: "We were very lucky to know him quite well. He was our superhero when we were teenagers and then a couple of years later we were hanging out together, and that was surreal. But he was very good to us, we played some shows with him on the Glass Spider tour in Canada, we did some football stadiums together and that was fun."

Nick squints his eyes then winces: "I have a personal memory where we played charades. I won't go into it… but the theme was movies. One thing I will tell is what Iggy Pop gave to his girlfriend… she wasn't English, so he gave her *Where The Green Ants Dream*, a Werner Herzog movie. She wasn't very happy about it." Simon isn't telling any Bowie stories: "No way, I'm saving mine for the autobiography… which will never get written."

Still, new music remains a possibility. Nick teases: "There were some things that we didn't finish from the last album, *Paper Gods*." Simon adds: "There are a few little projects but if we start talking about it now it will develop its own mythology and when it does come out it probably won't be as interesting, so it's best we just say, 'Yeah, there is something in the pot that we didn't actually scrape out'. But we're always up for a sneaky collaboration!"

Although *Paper Gods* came out in 2015, the accompanying tour raged on until September 2017. "The tour has been the year's highlight," the frontman confirms. "We played so many special places – like Red Rocks in Colorado, which was like a giant spaceship that somebody abandoned 100 years ago. On this tour we've been playing to much younger audiences than we have in the last 10 years, because we've had a hit song [*Pressure Off*] on radio."

Pressure Off is undoubtedly a classic Duran single, but the mechanics of touring an album has changed considerably since their Eighties pomp. Simon agrees: "When we started out, live shows were promotional tools to help sell the record. Audiences really didn't have to pay a lot of money to come see you play live.

"Now, because recorded music is pretty much free to a lot of people, they can pick and choose. The value has dropped, but the value of the ephemeral moment, of the band onstage, that thing which can't be recorded because it's how you feel. A lot of this stuff is all part of the experience, particularly in festivals. We've seen this incredible rise of the music festival, and it's the personal experience that people are now investing so much more in."

If the concert experience is now all-important, it means artists have had to become more professional in their outlook as well. The days of heavy partying are behind Duran, most of the time. Simon concedes: "It's more sensible on the road these days. Schedules are more sensible. We've learned that the hour-and-three-quarters that we are on stage is the most magical time and you've really got to concentrate on that moment and enjoy it and then everything else falls into place."

POP_UP On 29 June 2018, BBC Four screened the *There's Something You Should Know* and *Duran Duran: A Night In* documentaries. John Taylor paid his respects: "Without the BBC, there would be no Duran Duran."

"WE ENJOY IT. WE'RE NOT THE NORM. WE'RE NOT DRIVEN BY COMMERCE."

SIMON LE BON

The day that Duran Duran met *Classic Pop* they were planning to see in 2017 with a pair of shows in Washington DC, where a certain President-elect may have possibly been listening in from the White House. Nick deadpans: "It's the place to be right now, I hear." Simon rolls his eyes: "In this country we have a slight out-of-proportion interest in American politics. I'm over it. But playing New Year's Eve is a badge of pride. Everybody else is having fun!"

Festivals have become a vitally important part of tours in recent years for 'classic' bands as well as newer acts. Duran Duran are still relatively fresh to the outdoor multi-day, multi-band game, but in recent times they have agreed to play Lovebox, Coachella and Bestival, with highly agreeable results across the board. "We're enjoying the format," Nick says. "Before, we tended to avoid festivals because we like more control over our production and to play what we want for however long we want."

Simon sees it a little differently: "It's great to have the opportunity to play to people who wouldn't normally go to our show," he points out. "Don't get me wrong, I love our fans, but a festival is the real acid test. It strips away the crap and you become focused as a band."

The obvious big event so far missing from Duran Duran's bucket list is the legendary Glastonbury Festival. It's an idea that hasn't escaped Simon. "For the right slot, we would drop everything to do that," he confirms. Which begs the question, what is the "right slot"? "That's between us and the Eavises [festival organisers]," he says, keeping mum.

If Glastonbury fails to materialise, then how about staging their own event? After all, Duran Duran are one of the best-connected bands on the planet. "We would put a really good festival together," Nick says. "It would be fun, but I think you have to time it right – you don't do it while you have a new album out. We would have a mixture of EDM, hip-hop, indie and pop." Simon adds: "A bit of esoterica, maybe a little classical as well. Some weird medieval choir at 3pm in the afternoon. I would enjoy that."

That word "enjoy" is the key to the band's success. They aren't merely collecting pay cheques: it genuinely seems that being Duran Duran is a lifestyle all four members actively cherish.

"We do enjoy it," Simon agrees. "We're not the norm. We're not driven by commerce. We're driven by artistry and a desire to leave a body of work and a desire to be part of what's going on. We make great music together. We love to be around each other and we want it to continue." ■

POP_UP Fans of *Paper Gods* might like to invest in a 350-copy 4-LP white vinyl boxset with artwork by Alex Israel. It contains an exclusive version of *Pressure Off* and an unreleased track, *As Seen From A Distance*. The price: £300.

Duran Duran are presented with their ASCAP Golden Note award by ASCAP President (and acclaimed songwriter) Paul Williams, 10 November 2016

LONG LIVE VINYL

WHEN IT COMES TO MEMORABILIA, DURAN DURAN OFFER EVERYTHING FROM BOARD GAMES AND CORKSCREWS TO DIGITAL WATCHES AND EVEN CONDOMS. VINYL FANATICS NEED NOT WORRY, THOUGH, AS THERE'S A TRUCKLOAD OF ALLURING COLLECTIBLES ON OFFER. HERE WE SELECT A FEW FAVOURITES, INCLUDING A HEAVENLY ITALIAN BOXSET, A CHEEKY 12" AND SPECIAL RECORD STORE DAY TREATS…

RIK FLYNN

RARE EARLY VINYL – PLANET EARTH, WITH COMPLIMENTS, GIRLS ON FILM, CARELESS MEMORIES (EMI, 1981)

Early releases often become sought-after items. Mint UK copies of *Planet Earth* with the blue/white labels and knockout centre can fetch up to £70. Rarer still, the early 12" Netherlands/Portugal promo of *With Compliments* with *Planet Earth*, its Night Version (labelled Special Disco Mix) and *Careless Memories* can bring £100. The ultra-rare Colombian 12" maxi-single of *Girls On Film* on translucent green vinyl will draw £250, while cool versions of *Careless Memories* include the UK 12" test pressing with red label (£20-50), the South African 7" with its unique cover (£70) and the rare Bolivian pressing (£40+).

RIO LP (EMI, 1982)

With Patrick Nagel's instantly recognisable sleeve art, *Rio* is an essential album to own on vinyl. Standard copies are cheap (around £5), while a mint first pressing with textured outer and original printed inner sleeve is valued at around £45. For those looking for something special, the Aussie *Radio Special* promo – with John Taylor and Nick Rhodes introducing the tracks – is one of the rarest Duran-related releases in existence. Estimates suggest around 500 copies of this LP exist, making it wallet-emptying at well over £150. Italian and Australian *Rio* promos are also scarce, especially if complete with their original stamped 12" blue envelopes, while the alternate blue-sleeved promos sent out to Uruguay also fetch a pretty penny.

PICTURE DISCS

We're suckers for a decent picture disc, and Simon Le Bon and crew have produced two fine – and rare – examples that got us on the search. Firstly, *The Reflex* has several seductive variants. The US version has a tiger on one side and a band pic on the other and features two variations of the excellent Dance Mix (around £10); the UK version, on the other hand, comes in a smart transparent PVC sleeve with additional blue graphics and features the single version on the A-side, with the Dance Mix and *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)* on the flip. Other considerations include a neat 1983 flexi-disc (featuring *Girls On Film*, *Rio*, *Hungry Like The Wolf*, *Save A Prayer* and *The Chauffeur)* given away with various magazines (£10 mint), and the Italian *Strange Behaviour* EP in die-cut sleeve offering alternate mixes of *Notorious* and *Skin Trade*. If still sealed, it's worth around £40.

IS THERE SOMETHING I SHOULD KNOW? (EMI, 1983)

Although it was later attached to the 1983 US version of *Duran Duran* as the only new offering on the reissued LP, this was a standalone UK single and the group's first No.1 at home. A rare early run of the 7" was withdrawn as its instrumental flip, *Faith In This Colour*, featured uncleared *Star Wars* samples. A mis-pressed slower mix (later entitled the Alternate Slow Mix) of the B-side was exclusive to the first run of UK 7"s and very few exist. It's also worth tracking down the UK 12", with Ian Little and Alex Sadkin's slow-building Monster Mix, plus the blue Record Store Day 7" – cut three decades later – with a repro of the original sleeve by the UK's Assorted Images (£10-20).

THE WILD BOYS (PARLOPHONE, 1984)

There were seven UK versions of this classic Nile Rodgers-produced single. The standard UK 7" is abundant, issued with either black or silver injection label. There are plenty of standard 12"s in circulation, too, worthwhile for the *Wilder Than Wild Boys Extended Mix*, while the numbered 12" promo (with alternative label on the A-side) fetches around a tenner. For the serious Durannie, the five (yes, five!) limited edition versions of the 7", released during the autumn of '84 and each with a different band member on the cover, are the ultimate catch. Find them separately and you'll pay less, but a full set will save you the trouble for £50-£100. Add the sixth 'full band' sleeve version to complete the collection.

LA DOLCE VITA LTD. EDITION BOXSET (1986)

Intended as a celebration of the band's many achievements, and right up there at the very pinnacle of Duran Duran vinyl collectibles, this Italian 5LP boxset is a devotee's dream. The opulent clamshell box displays the green, white and red of the Italian flag, while luxuriant gold leaf foil logo and a gold horned 'pan/angel' emblem provide added glitz. It was crafted by American graphic designer Frank Olinsky, who intended it to resemble 'a large box of chocolates'. Inside are Italian pressings of the band's first five albums and an oversized fold-out poster of the *Notorious* album cover-art to seal the deal. Pricetags vary wildly, but around £150 should score a decent copy.

SKIN TRADE (EMI, 1987)

Duran Duran's 15th single is a standout track on *Notorious*. An anomaly for the band, this funked-up curio featured Le Bon delivering a falsetto vocal amongst synth-heavy Prince-like backing, with blasts of brass from in-demand combo The Borneo Horns (who also played with Bowie). Flip it over for *We Need You*, the only original B-side from the *Notorious era*. For the ultimate edition, seek out the French 12" with cheeky 'bum' sleeve that was banned in the UK. With the offending sleeve and Larry Levan's fluttering Stretch Remix, this is prized amongst collectors (around £20+). The Parisian Remix is worth a spin, too – find it on the rare promo-only Master Mixes EP, or on the *Come Undone* CD single.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SHAME? 7" TRIPLE PACK (EMI, 1989)

A unique addition to any Duran collection would be this limited gatefold 7" triple-pack with black and white postcards designed by Virginia Liberatore. Each of the three vinyls features a live sleeve shot of a different band member – Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes and John Taylor – and a different B-side. Though the single nosedived in the UK and US, it's one of Le Bon's favourites and was dedicated to three of their late friends: Alex Sadkin, Andy Warhol and Le Bon's childhood pal David Miles. Each record was sold separately, with the sleeve folio that housed the lot issued along with the first 7" (Simon). Now the complete set is available, and well worth the 30-odd pounds you'll pay for it.

RARE LPS: DURAN DURAN (1981), ARENA (1984), 'THE WEDDING ALBUM' (1993)

Certain DD LPs pique the serious collector's interest. The eponymous debut is easily available, but a sealed 1981 US first pressing with picture sleeve and promo 'punch-hole' has more kudos (£75+). This eight-track edition omits *To The Shore* and *Is There Something I Should Know?* but adds an extended mix of *Planet Earth*, gloriously drawn out to over six minutes. Another holy grail is the non-gatefold, no-booklet Colombian *Arena* LP on marbled grey vinyl; one sold in 2017 for just shy of £400. Lastly, copies of 1993's *Thank You* LP with poster are rare (£100+), as are UK first pressings of '*The Wedding Album*' (with printed inner intact (£150).

RED CARPET MASSACRE LTD. EDITION DOUBLE LP (ERIKA, 2009)

Almost two years subsequent to its initial release, 2000 lucky vinyl-loving Durannies were able to get their mitts on the band's 2007 album, albeit in an America-only, limited edition format. Issued through Erika Records, this super-rare double 12" custom-gatefold release featured the album's dozen tracks, plus the R&B-tinged brassfest of bonus cut *Cry Baby Cry* – all resplendent on two handsome red vinyls with gold sticker, glossy inner sleeves, a deluxe 12-page lyrics booklet to commemorate 40 years of the band, and some exclusive photos. As would be expected, all 2000 copies were quickly snapped up and these days £100+ isn't an unusual price for a decent copy.

RSD VINYL – GIRL PANIC! 7" (2011), NO ORDINARY EP (2013), THANKSGIVING LIVE (2018) & BUDOKAN 12" (2018)

The Durans have been generous with Record Store Day exclusives. 2011's 7" run of *Girl Panic!* has David Lynch's mesmerising remix on the B-side (£30+). The *No Ordinary* EP (5000 copies) was offered in 2013 on 'warm white' vinyl with three live acoustic tracks – *Come Undone*, *Notorious* and *Hungry Like The Wolf* – and fetches about £15. In 2018, the *Thanksgiving Live* double LP on marbled grey vinyl featured a 1997 set recorded on the Ultra Chrome, Latex And Steel Tour (£40-50), while the *Budokan* live LP offered a seven-song set from the Paper Gods Tour in Tokyo (around £30).

CLASSIC POP MOMENTS

© Virginia Turbett/Redferns

POP QUIZ

DURAN DURAN VS SPANDAU BALLET

28 DECEMBER 1984

The Oasis v Blur chart battle in the 90s had nothing on the ultimate band face-off from the previous decade – Duran Duran versus Spandau Ballet on BBC One's *Pop Quiz*. Hosted by Radio One DJ Mike Read, the much-anticipated episode of 28 December 1984 featured all five members of both bands with John Taylor skippering Duran and Tony Hadley elected 'spokesperson' for Spandau. Rounds included Intros, Spot The Star, a special Duran/Spandau lyrics segment where each group had to name the hits of the other fivepiece as well as a hotly-contested quickfire buzzer section. And the all-important final score? Duran Duran triumphed with an impressive 52 points with Spandau Ballet bringing up the rear on a creditable 40 points. Steve Harnell

DURAN DURAN
the wild boys
SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER
Hungry like the wolf
duran duran
Electric Barbarella
ASTRONAUT
ALL
SHE
WANTS
IS
Duranduran
arena
recorded around the world 1984
PLANET EARTH
THE REFLEX
ALL YOU NEED IS NOW
PRESSURE OFF
FEATURING JANELLE MONÁE AND NILE RODGERS
DURAN NOTORIOUS
GIRLS ON FILM
RIO
CARNIVAL
Hungry like the wolf
Rio
Planet earth
Girls on film
THE MAN WHO STOLE A LEOPARD
STRANGE BEHAVIOUR
CARELESS MEMORIES
DURAN/DURAN
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